

Trudeau to resign



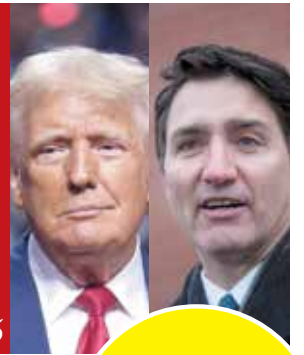
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THE HILL TIMES

Exclusive opinion: inside

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NEWS

Political leaders urged to stand up to 'a bully like Trump' as U.S. president-elect threatens Canada's sovereignty, economy

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

Any politician hoping to lead Canada this year must demonstrate a willingness to stand up to Donald Trump, say some MPs and academics, with Canadians responding with distaste toward the U.S. president-elect's threats against this country's economy and sovereignty.

"At some point or another, Canadian nationalism is going to reassert itself, and people are going to start to say, 'I don't think we are the 51st state,'" said Liberal MP John McKay (Scarborough-Guildwood, Ont.), co-chair of the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group. "We are a sovereign nation. For the last 200 years, we have established ourselves as a sovereign, independent nation, and we intend to continue to do so. And if that results in confrontations, so be it."

The incoming president of the United States has taken a belligerent stance against Canada since shortly after his election victory this past November, going so far as to repeatedly threaten this country's sovereignty by absorbing it as a "51st state." He has also promised to impose 25-per-cent tariffs on all Canadian

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NEWS

Retaliatory tariffs, PR offensives: how the government can respond to Trump's threats while Parliament is prorogued



BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

Even with Parliament prorogued until March 24 and



the Liberal Party in the midst of a leadership contest, the executive of the Canadian government retains a number of tools to

counter the economic attacks U.S. president-elect Donald Trump has

U.S. president-elect Donald Trump, left, will be inaugurated as Liberals campaign to replace Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, but the outgoing leader still has mechanisms to stand up to the incoming administration south of the border, say experts. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade and courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

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NEWS

'Anything's possible now': Liberal MPs shift from 'hopelessness to optimism' after Trudeau bows out, though this could fade without the 'right' leader

BY ABBAS RANA

Following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's announcement last week that he would not lead the party in the next election, Liberal MPs say they feel bullish about their prospects in the next election, but also say this optimism could fade if the party fails to elect the "right" leader in the upcoming leadership race.

"I'm going back to my community excited for [the] campaign. I've never felt that before," said a Liberal MP, who spoke on a not-for-attribution basis to speak candidly. "We need to find a leader that connects with Canadians."

After months of pressure from MPs and senior Liberals urging Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) to step down, the prime minister announced on Jan. 6 that he would not lead the party in the next election. He cited internal conflicts as the reason for his decision. At Trudeau's request, Governor General Mary Simon prorogued Parliament until March 24. By then, a new Liberal leader

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By Christina Leadlay

Heard on the Hill

‘Maple syrup, meet Belgian waffle’: *The Economist* calls for Canada to join the EU



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, pictured in March 2023 on the Hill. A Jan. 2 article in *The Economist* argues Canada should join the European Union. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Economist columnist Stanley Pignal’s first article of the New Year made the case for Canada and the European Union to sweeten relations in light of recent remarks about our country by U.S. president-elect Donald Trump which have left many Canadians feeling sour.

As Pignal summarized: “Maple syrup, meet Belgian waffle.”

One month after Trump quipped that Canada should join America as its 51st state, the writer of the Euro-focused “Charlemagne” column writer suggested the idea of the EU inviting “Canada to become its 28th member” is an idea that “predates Mr. Trump.”

“Officials from Ottawa and EU capitals have been trading notes on how to handle another bout of Mr. Trump,” Pignal said in his Jan. 2 article, outlining mutual benefits for both Canada and the EU of a closer relationship.

“Like Europeans, Canadians believe that markets work, but must be tempered by welfare states. Their governments offer similar deals to citizens: high taxes, messy parliamentary politics [...] and good living standards for nearly all. Both trade openly, fret about global warming and dislike guns, the death penalty and Russian aggression,” he wrote.

While Pignal concedes that this “geopolitical thought experiment” is a long shot—given the EU’s chief criteria being that it’s a club reserved for Europeans, and that Canada might be “reticent to join a customs union that would jeopardise its vital trading ties with America”—he still argues Canada and the EU should work on finally closing its free-trade deal, which has remained in a “provisional” status since 2017 as 10 EU nations have been dragging their heels on ratifying the pact.

“Short of bringing Canada into the club, Europeans could start by getting that deal over the line,” Pignal said.

Conservative MP Berthold shares his cancer diagnosis

Three-term Conservative MP Luc Berthold announced he has prostate cancer in a Facebook posting on Jan. 5, but he said plans to stay on as MP, and will run again in the next federal election.

“My prostate is sick and it has cancer. In the next few weeks, I’ll have to get rid of it to prevent the disease from spreading elsewhere in my bones and organs,” he wrote on Face-



Conservative MP Luc Berthold. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

book, noting that both of his parents had died of different cancers.

In the post, Berthold wrote that he will be taking “a few weeks off to recover from the operation that will rid me of my sick prostate.”

“I have no intention of resigning, and I will be a candidate in the next federal election for the new riding of Mégantic-l’Érable-Lotbinière,” he said.

Ibbitson and Cryderman depart *The Globe and Mail*



Journalists Kelly Cryderman, left, and John Ibbitson. *Photograph courtesy of X, and The Hill Times* photograph by Cynthia Münster

The number 25 appears significant for both John Ibbitson and Kelly Cryderman, two erstwhile writers at *The Globe and Mail* who each bade farewell to the national paper in the final days of 2024.

On Dec. 20, Ibbitson announced he would be stepping back from *The Globe* where he’s

worked since 1999—that’s 25 years—but he’s not completely gone.

“I’ll be continuing to write for *The Globe* and others freelance, and there are books in the works,” Ibbitson wrote on X on Dec. 20.

Ibbitson, who is also an award-winning author, has served as the *Globe*’s Queen’s Park bureau chief, Washington bureau chief, and Ottawa bureau chief. He became its chief political writer in 2012, and then writer-at-large in 2015. Ibbitson is the author of three novels, and nine non-fiction books, including *The Big Shift: The Seismic Change in Canadian Politics, Business, and Culture and What It Means for Our Future*, which he co-wrote with Darrell Bricker in 2013. He and Bricker wrote a second book together, *Empty Planet: The Shock of Global Population Decline*, in 2019. Ibbitson’s biography, *Stephen Harper*, won the 2016 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing.

Meanwhile, Cryderman’s last day at *The Globe and Mail* was Dec. 27, 2024, she announced on social media on Jan. 2.

“After a quarter century in newspapers and journalism, I’m leaving to try something different in 2025—with details to come,” the Calgary-based journalist added in a LinkedIn post, thanking her *Globe* colleagues and expressing gratitude for her stints on a number of CBC panel shows.



Monday’s photo

End of an era

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured outside Rideau Cottage in Ottawa on Monday, Jan. 6, 2025, when he announced that he will resign as leader of the Liberal Party and prime minister of Canada once a new leader is elected.

The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

HEARD ON THE HILL

Continued from page 2

“Long live Canadian mainstream media—I will always be a subscriber and a supporter,” she wrote.

Cryderman’s been at *The Globe* since 2013, starting as a reporter before becoming a columnist in 2014. Prior to that, she was at *The Calgary Herald*

from 2006-2013, “covering Alberta politics, the environment, social affairs, workplace safety issues and Ponzi schemes.” Previously, Cryderman was *The Edmonton Journal’s* legislative reporter for five years. She is an alumna of Carleton University’s journalism school, and has a master’s degree from the London School of Economics.

Joanna Smith joins *The Logic*

As of today, reporter **Joanna Smith** is starting a new role at *The Logic*, the news organization announced on Jan. 7.

“We are launching a new beat that will focus on trade and the Canada-U.S. relationship,” said deputy managing editor **Charlie Gillis** in the press release. “I’m thrilled to announce that to build this beat, Joanna Smith is joining *The Logic’s* Ottawa bureau as a reporter.”



Joanna Smith. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson

That same day, on LinkedIn, Smith posted “I am also eager to

get back to reporting on Parliament Hill and beyond for an organization that, in the words of

Editor-in-Chief and CEO **David Skok**, strives to give journalists “the resources, time and space to do their best work.”

Smith thanked her colleagues at *Kathari News* where she has been editor-in-chief since March 2024. Prior to that, Smith had been with *The Canadian Press* from 2016 until early last year, according to her LinkedIn profile. She is also a *Toronto Star* alumna.

Former Liberal MP Paul Szabo has died

Former longtime Liberal MP **Paul Szabo** died on Dec. 19. He was 76 years old.

His daughter **Reagan Johnson** confirmed to *Mississauga News’s* **Steve Cornwell** that Szabo had been suffering from dementia for some time. He leaves behind **Linda**, his wife of 53 years, his other children **Aaron** and **Whitney**, and four grandchildren.

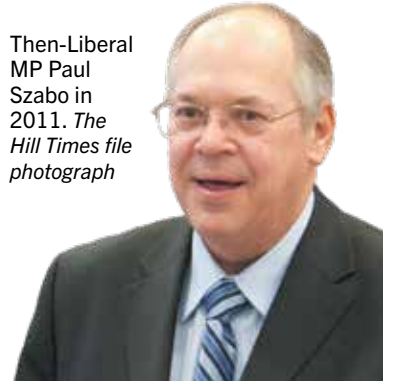
His funeral took place in Mississauga on Dec. 30.

Szabo was first elected in the riding of Mississauga South—

now Mississauga–Lakeshore—on 1993, and was re-elected six times until he was defeated by Conservative **Stella Ambler** in 2011.

During his time in government, Szabo was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services from 2000-2003. “Szabo was also known for his consistent anti-abortion stance and for opposing same-sex marriages,” according to Cornwell.

Then-Liberal MP Paul Szabo in 2011. *The Hill Times* file photograph



Ukraine’s Zelenskyy thanks Canada in Jan. 1 post



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

At least one world leader has nice things to say about Canada of late. Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelenskyy** posted some flattering remarks on New Year’s Day in honour of Canada’s taking on the G7 presidency in 2025.

“We are all placing great hope in this year—that together, in 2025, through our collective strength, we can achieve a stable and just peace,” he wrote in English, expressing thanks “for all

the assistance provided and the cooperation with all partners in the G7” in helping Ukraine maintain its independence in the face of Russian aggression.

“Over the past years of working together, we have proven that the unity of the world’s largest democracies can make life more secure. In the new year, we count on achieving similar results.”

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NEWS

Questions remain about how Liberals missed deficit target by over \$20-billion, says PBO

Disregarding fiscal anchors has become 'a unique feature' of the current government, says Chrétien-era Finance Canada official Eugene Lang.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

Most of the attention on last month's fall economic statement centred on the bombshell resignation of then-finance minister Chrystia Freeland but—as the political turmoil sparked by her departure continues to unravel—serious questions remain about how and why the government missed its deficit target, adding to a pattern of the Liberals failing to maintain fiscal anchors since coming to power in 2015.

While the government has pointed to what it calls two "one-time" expenses that caused the deficit overrun, Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux told *The Hill Times* that, based on the documentation Ottawa has publicly released to date, "we can't say for sure" whether those two items fully explain why the deficit grew by around 50 per cent.

On Dec. 16 and 17, respectively, the government tabled the 2024 fall economic statement (FES), and the public accounts for the 2023-24 fiscal year. The documents revealed that the federal deficit had ballooned to \$61.9-billion, well beyond the \$40-billion pledged for that fiscal year promised by the Liberal government in its April 2024 budget.

The government blamed two contingent liabilities that had come onto the books after the April budget: \$16.4-billion related to Indigenous settlements, and \$4.7-billion tied to COVID-19 costs. The latter includes writing off expired vaccines, as well as COVID-era loans the government no longer expects to recover.

"Absent these expenses, the projected 2023-24 budgetary deficit would have been roughly \$40.8-billion, compared to Budget 2024's forecast of \$40-billion," says the document.

Contingent liabilities are expenses that the government expects to incur in the future because of events it believes are likely to occur. For example, once the government expects it may be forced to pay out a legal settlement down the road, it must book that expense into the budget in the fiscal year when it becomes



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and then-finance minister Chrystia Freeland stop for a photo before the 2024 budget is tabled in the House of Commons on April 16, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

aware of this future obligation, even though the payout may be years away. This must be done once the government has an estimate of what it likely owes, and believes there is a 70 per cent or greater likelihood that it will be obligated to pay.

However, Giroux says not enough information was presented—in either the FES or the public accounts—to tell if the two liabilities are truly solely at fault.

"We don't know for sure that the increase in liabilities is the determining factor in the government missing its deficit target," said Giroux.

Giroux said that on Dec. 18—the day following the release of the public accounts—his office sent an inquiry to Finance Canada for additional details.

"We are waiting for an answer," said Giroux on Dec. 19. "So right now, we can't say for sure whether it's just the one-time events—the liabilities—or if it's that and other elements. For example, direct program expenses and a decrease in revenues." The PBO expects to address this in a report in the coming weeks.

Giroux noted that the FES reports government revenues for 2023-24 came in \$5.5-billion lower than forecast in the budget, meaning that is also part of the story of how the target was missed, despite the government having placed the emphasis on the two contingent liabilities.

Booking these claims into the 2023-24 fiscal year also suggests the government became aware of them before its fiscal year end on March 31, 2024, so it is unclear why they were not included in the budget released April 16.

The Hill Times sent detailed questions to Finance Canada about the contingent liabilities, and the role they played in the government missing its deficit target.

Page 187 of the fall economic update provides a summary of economic and fiscal developments that occurred since the Liberals publishing their budget, including a line on direct program expenses for 2023-24, showing they increased by only \$16.4-billion.

In an emailed reply, a Finance Canada official told *The Hill Times* only that "all contingent liabilities are associated with this line item." Given that that government said it added a total of \$21.4-billion in contingent liabilities, this indicates there are other offsetting items on this line that the government did not provide details about in its reply.

The official did not address additional questions about what other factors affected this line. In particular, they did not say whether there was already some money booked to that fiscal year to cover these liabilities, or whether other program savings had affected that line.

Giroux said that contingent liabilities have been growing in recent years, and require greater attention.

"It's sound practice to disclose these," said Giroux. However, he said, the government should be able to better anticipate such expenses, and not add them to the books so late in the fiscal cycle.

"It's a bit surprising to see these claims being reassessed, or new claims showing up when the government has been engaged on a path to reconciliation for at least nine years," said Giroux. "So maybe these are not just one-time events, if they are recurring and reappearing every year ... Maybe it's rather a policy direction that the government is taking."

'A lack of discipline'

Keeping the deficit to \$40-billion was one of three key fiscal anchors laid out by Freeland (Uni-

versity—Rosedale, Ont.) in April 2024, along with commitments to maintain a declining debt- and deficit-to-GDP ratio. The other two budget commitments were maintained by narrow margins.

Eugene Lang, a former Finance Canada official and ministerial staffer in the 1990s, said the government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.)—who announced on Jan. 6 his plans to step down in the coming months—has a pattern of missing fiscal anchors.

Lang was one of several public finance experts who said this pattern reduces the Liberal government's credibility when it makes future fiscal commitments.

"They've abandoned all of them," said Lang, who is now a policy professor at Queen's University. "And this is from the beginning, under two different finance ministers."

Lang said the modern concept of a fiscal anchor in Canadian politics was established in the 1990s during the era of then-prime minister Jean Chrétien and then-finance minister Paul Martin. At that time, the Liberal government said it would reduce the deficit to three per cent of GDP within three years—a target it not only met, but exceeded, when it balanced the budget.

The Trudeau government, noted Lang, came to power with a commitment to cap deficits at \$10-billion, balance the budget by 2019, and reduce the debt ratio to 27 per cent of GDP. The government's failure to meet these targets in the pre-pandemic era began the pattern of it failing to maintain its fiscal anchors throughout its mandate, said Lang.

"Other governments have had them, and they've adhered to them, except for this government," said Lang. "You could argue it's a unique feature of Trudeau's government that they don't take these things seriously."

He said one reason for this outcome is due to Trudeau's finance ministers appearing not to have had the same level of "autonomy and authority" as those under former prime ministers Brian Mulroney, Chrétien, Martin, and Stephen Harper.

Crucially, said Lang, Trudeau's finance ministers seem not to have been empowered to say "no" to new spending proposals.

Despite the rivalry between Chrétien and Martin, "everybody in the government knew that the finance minister was fully backed up by the PM, and that there was no going around Paul Martin appealing for some spending," said Lang. "Chrétien made that very clear throughout his time in office. They didn't like each other ... but everybody knew when it came to spending decisions, fiscal policy decisions, there was no daylight between the two."

He said the public falling out Trudeau had with Freeland, and also with his first finance minister Bill Morneau, highlights how spending decisions were "run out of the Prime Minister's Office in a way we've never seen before."

University of Calgary economist Trevor Tombe said regardless of what fiscal anchor a government chooses, it's important to maintain it because missing it shows "a lack of discipline."

"When people talk about discipline, usually they mean, 'government's too big,'" said Tombe. "Whatever your preferences are around big governments or small, if you lay out a fiscal plan ... but every single time you update that plan you change it, that reveals a lack of discipline."

He said fiscal anchors need to be "simple" and "clear," because they play a role in helping the public understand and assess a government's choices.

Missing fiscal anchors is a problem that "characterizes" the current government "ever since it took office," said Tombe.

Pollster Nik Nanos said the measure that Canadians are most likely to care about is whether the deficit is going up or down because this is similar to what voters focus on in their personal finances.

"It doesn't mean that [government has to] balance the books. But what people want to see is a trend," said Nanos. "So what is the trend under the Liberals right now? The trend in terms of debt is moving in the wrong direction."

Giroux said that by "so quickly blowing up" one of the three key fiscal anchors the government set in budget 2024—which was delivered only months earlier, and after the end of the fiscal year in question—it "undermines the credibility of the remaining two."

"It suggests that the other two are not on as firm or solid ground as the government itself indicated," said Giroux. "It suggests that exceeding their own deficit targets is not something that worries the government."

"If it's inconvenient to maintain them, they will consider abandoning them. It's not the binding constraint."

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Justin Trudeau's final act: a tragedy of his own making



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his plans to resign as prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party once a new leader is elected at a press conference outside Rideau Cottage on Jan. 6, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

History won't only remember Justin Trudeau for the early triumphs or the transformative programs like pharmacare and dental care that Jagmeet Singh squeezed out of him. It'll also be for his resignation made too late and the effects it caused.

George Soule

Opinion



The drama of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's resignation was less a moment of accountability and more a closing act drenched in deflection. At his resignation press conference on Jan. 6, Trudeau painted a picture of himself as the victim—not of his own ego or dwindling public trust, but of internal party attacks. By refusing to shoulder any of the blame for his party's unravelling or the growing challenges Canadians are facing, Trudeau proved—despite his resumé—he never really understood Shakespeare.

In his prepared remarks, he said, "It has become clear to me that if I'm having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option in that election." When asked about regrets, he acted as though his failure on electoral reform was everyone else's fault, all while still defending his bait-and-switch

of ranked ballot over proportional representation that even his own MPs knew wouldn't fly.

He might as well have quoted Hamlet directly, "I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious..."

No genuine *mea culpa*, no acknowledgement of the situation that had even longtime Liberals looking for lifeboats. Instead, he positioned himself as the captain, valiantly stepping down to save the ship—only after steering it directly into the rocks. In short, "It's not me, it's you."

Still stinging from Chrystia Freeland's explosive December departure, Trudeau delivered her a parting shot. Despite her valiant efforts, Trudeau made sure she could never wash her hands of him, and reminded the country Freeland was with him every step of the way.

As cruel as it seems now, he may have done her a favour. If Freeland—or any woman—successfully "wins" the leadership, the glass cliff Trudeau has set up is steep. Taking leadership at the eleventh hour, when the tide is out, left in the shallows

to take the fall for the mess created by the man who preceded her. The parallels to Kim Campbell are almost too glaring.

Trudeau could have left a year ago—or even six months ago—with the kind of dignified exit most politicians dream of. Back then, he still had enough goodwill—at least from partisan Liberals—to leave with respect intact. But by dragging it out, he made the choice to put his ego ahead of his party, his government, and, frankly, our country. Trudeau leaves behind a Liberal Party careening to a position that is somehow worse than how he found it in 2013, and a Canada facing some of the most complex challenges in recent memory.

Liberals now have to quickly elect a leader who will almost certainly inherit a historic defeat just weeks or even days after taking over. For the rest of us, the country is effectively leaderless for the next couple of months. No big deal, right? It's not like our closest ally and largest trading partner is about to swear in a president who has openly joked about annexing Canada, threatened us with 25-per-cent tariffs, and openly said he admires fascist leaders. Oh, wait. That's exactly what's happening.

And let's not forget the staffers and supporters who gave up years of their lives for this soon-to-be former prime minister. It's easy to forget the humans involved in our political system. Their pain doesn't have generational consequences, but it's still real. I have genuine compassion for them. They sacrificed, missed birthdays and holidays, and delayed big-life decisions because they believed in Trudeau. Now, after months of defending him against strong opposition and internal fights while he put his own interests ahead of everything else, he bailed on them. No matter how misplaced I personally think their loyalty was, they deserved better than this.

When history remembers Justin Trudeau, it won't just be for the early triumphs or the transformative programs like pharmacare and dental care that NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh squeezed out of him. It'll also be for his resignation made too late and the consequences it caused.

The rest of us are left to live out the final act of this tragedy and deal with the consequences of a script we never asked for.

George Soule is a principal at Syntax Strategic, and a former NDP director of communications.

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NEWS

Liberal leadership race and upcoming election ‘vital time’ for advocacy, say lobbyists

The Trudeau government will be around for another two-and-a-half more months, and lobbyists say they are stepping on the gas to get work done with the current crew.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Lobbyists say they are staying nimble and waiting to see how the dust settles, in terms of potential Liberal leadership candidates and staff changes, and preparing clients for the fast-approaching federal election, following the recently announced resignation of the prime minister.

“Who are the leadership contenders going to be? Do they need to step out of cabinet? Who replaces them in cabinet? And then there’s going to be a lot of staff turnover as well,” said Stevie O’Brien, a senior adviser with public affairs firm McMillan Vantage. “For long-term strategy, 2025 was always going to be an election year, [but] it now looks like the election will likely be in April instead of October, so timelines will need to be adjusted if anybody wants to get anything done.”

On Jan. 6, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) prorogued Parliament until March 24, and announced his intention to give up the Liberal leadership and step down as prime minister after the party chooses his replacement.

First out of the gate to announce a bid for the Liberal leadership was Frank Baylis, a former Montreal MP and businessman, as reported first by *The Hill Times* on Jan. 6.

As of Jan. 9, other leadership candidates include Liberal MP Chandra Arya (Nepean, Ont.), while Mark Carney, the former governor of the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England, said on Jan. 6 he is “considering” entering the race. Other possible candidates may include former deputy prime minister and finance minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.), and cabinet ministers such as Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.) and Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartier-ville, Que.).

Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) said



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation as Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Party on Jan. 6, and prorogued Parliament until March 24. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Stevie O’Brien, a senior adviser with public affairs firm McMillan Vantage, says, ‘The government’s not going to be functioning the way it did before the holidays, so there will be more limited, probably, opportunities [for] access and frankly, focus.’ Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Sajjid Lakhani, manager of government relations and strategy with Impact Public Affairs, says, ‘Most politicians, especially the leader of the official opposition, have made it clear that they want to hear from the grassroots folks.’ Photograph courtesy of Sajjid Lakhani



Dan Lovell, federal director for Sussex Strategy Group, says ‘Other than very select bills that made it through the process, effectively nothing happened in the fall session, in terms of legislation.’ Photograph courtesy of Dan Lovell

on Jan. 8 that he does not plan to run for the party’s top job, although Liberal MP Judy Sgro (Humber River-Black Creek, Ont.) and some others from the party are urging him to reconsider.

A critical issue facing cabinet ministers in deciding whether to throw their hats into the leadership race is the question of if they would need to resign from their positions. Trudeau was undecided on that question, with his press secretary, Simon Lafortune, stating in an email that “We will have more to say on this matter soon,” as reported by *The Hill Times* on Jan. 7.

O’Brien, whose background includes serving as chief of staff to a Liberal minister of border security, and as chief of staff for two Liberal ministers of public services and procurement, told *The Hill Times* it will be “a very different game in 2025” as lobbyists look ahead to the end of prorogation, and the emergence of the next government. A suspended Parliament means no new legislation will be introduced and that current government bills have died, but the government is still function-

ing, she said. There are advocacy possibilities for engagement on regulations, engagement with the public service, and party platform development before the election, according to O’Brien.

“There is a much shorter window. The government’s not going to be functioning the way it did before the holidays, so there will be more limited, probably, opportunities [for] access and frankly, focus,” she said. “The government is going to be focused on the leadership race and on who is going to replace Trudeau, so it will have less bandwidth for dealing with non-priority files. They’ll definitely be still dealing with the Trump tariffs. They’re going to be dealing with their internal leadership, and they’ll be dealing with border issues and public safety, but I’m not sure there’s going to be a great amount of bandwidth to deal with any issues beyond that.”

Sajjid Lakhani, manager of government relations and strategy with Impact Public Affairs and a former special assistant to Liberal MP Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam-Port Coquitlam, B.C.), told *The Hill Times* that,

for lobbyists and their clients to frame issues that may have been affected by this prorogation to be election issues, and eventually next government issues.”

Dan Lovell, federal director for the Sussex Strategy Group and a former executive assistant to Liberal MP Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Ont.), told *The Hill Times* that nothing about the last six months has been “normal,” due to the privilege debate that stalled work in the House since September.

“You can say that other than very select bills that made it through the process, effectively nothing happened in the fall session, in terms of legislation. You could argue, for all intents and purposes ... that the House was kind of already acting as if it was prorogued because nothing was really moving,” he said. “I think any of my colleagues here in Ottawa and across the country would have already been preparing their clients for one of the possibilities, of prorogation, coming sometime in the fall or even in the new year, because of the way that Parliament has effectively, or I guess ineffectively, run over the last number of months.”

Susan Smith, a principal and co-founder of Bluesky Strategy Group and a former Liberal strategist, told *The Hill Times* that a prorogued Parliament frees up the availability of MPs to meet with stakeholders on key issues.

“To me, it puts more hours in the day for stakeholder engagement. I think there’s some opportunity there, and government is still proceeding. Short of the pause in the House of Commons, ministers still have full authorities. Departments are still functioning. Things are still moving. I think there continues to be an opportunity for advocacy and education from a government relations perspective.”

Smith also agreed that the filibuster during the fall sitting was a challenge for anyone trying to advance legislation.

“With Parliament prorogued, it all depends. Not every client has an issue that goes straight to the floor of the House of Commons, right? Sometimes they want to talk to elected officials, sometimes they want to talk to staff, sometimes they want to talk to bureaucrats. And so, the upside is that work can continue, and does and will continue, because the government still functions.”

Kevin Bosch, managing partner and co-founder of Sandstone Group and a former Liberal staffer, told *The Hill Times* the next few weeks will be a critical advocacy period, because of the upcoming election.

“We’re probably heading to an election in April or May, right? It’s a vital time for people to get things done,” he said. “Obviously, this [Trudeau] government ... will be around for two-and-a-half more months. If there’s anything that you are close to getting completed, you want to get that done. You want to sort of step on the gas and ensure that can happen while the people that you’ve been working with for a while are still there.”

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The Hill Times

Civil servants and the public ‘will suffer’ without moving bill on whistleblower protection, says Centre for Free Expression director

Meanwhile, Sean Bruyeya says whistleblower protections are also needed for veterans and their families because they are ‘highly vulnerable to reprisals from either VAC or the company employees and subcontractors, should they occur.’

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Prospects for improving Canada’s protections for whistleblowers through a bill intended to update the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act look “bleak” as opposition party leaders make it clear they want to move to an election as soon as possible when Parliament resumes, according to the director of the Centre for Free Expression at Toronto Metropolitan University.

“We’re pretty cynical about the willingness of governments to make the necessary changes because the lack of protections actually serve their interests even though it’s harmed the public’s interest,” said James Turk. “[Bill] C-290 was unique in the sense that, for a variety of idiosyncratic reasons, it actually passed in the House of Commons unanimously. I think it would be very hard to reproduce that situation.”

A total of 26 government bills were lost on the Order Paper on Jan. 6 when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) prorogued Parliament and announced his plans to give up the Liberal leadership and resign as prime minister after the party chooses his replacement.

Private members’ bills such as Bill C-290, introduced by Bloc Québécois MP Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, Que.), may be restored in a new session of Parliament at the same stage in the process when Parliament was prorogued. However, if an election is triggered by the government not surviving a confidence vote when Parliament resumes, all the work done on Bill C-290 could still be lost. The bill completed first reading in the Senate on Feb. 6, 2024.

Turk said he doesn’t expect there will be time in the new



On Jan. 6, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, prorogued Parliament until March 24 and announced his plans to give up the Liberal leadership and resign as prime minister. NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh said at a news conference that same day he intends to vote to bring down the government at the next throne speech. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

session to bring the bill back for consideration, because opposition parties have made it clear they plan to initiate a non-confidence vote as soon as possible. NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) said at a Jan. 6 news conference he intends to vote to bring down the government at the Throne Speech, and Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil-Chambly, Que.) told reporters that same day that “now is the time for an election.”

“In the case of C-290, its dying is going to mean that federal civil servants, who want to blow the whistle, and the public, who will benefit from knowing things that otherwise would not be known, are going to continue to suffer,” said Turk. “It’s unfortunate for the public because we’re the chief beneficiaries of whistleblowers.”

An update to the Public Service Disclosure Protection Act is needed because Canada’s whistleblower protections have been found to be the weakest of any major industrialized country, according to Turk. A 2021 report by the International Bar Association placed Canada in a three-way tie with Lebanon and Norway for world’s weakest whistleblower protection laws.

“Certainly we—and I assume some others—are going to be pressing the opposition and the government to introduce a bill that would do the job properly,” said Turk. “We will certainly fight for that. It’s just going to be a very difficult fight, given past history of the unwillingness of the government to effectively protect whistleblowers.”

Duff Conacher, co-founder of Democracy Watch, issued a press release on Jan. 6 calling on all parties to set “aside their partisan

self-interest” in order to pass legislation before a federal election, such as Bill C-290 and Bill C-65, which is intended to help prevent foreign interference and improve election fairness.

“We’re talking about protections for hundreds of thousands of federal government workers and fair elections and stopping foreign interference. It is much more in the public interest to have all of those measures enacted ... before another election, or we’re going to have an election that could be undermined by serious foreign interference again,” Conacher told *The Hill Times*.

“I’m sure they’re going to be saying to themselves in some way, ‘Wait a second, we have Bill C-290 and other changes to be made to protect whistleblowers, and we have this bill that has been going through Parliament for two-and-a-half years, and now you’re just going to throw it away?’”

Conacher reiterated his call in a Jan. 8 press release, where he also announced Democracy Watch would pursue a court challenge of Trudeau’s request to prorogue Parliament. He argued that shutting down Parliament for almost three months to avoid a non-confidence vote without consulting any opposition leaders or Liberal MPs “is fundamentally undemocratic and unjustifiable.”

Bill C-65 proposed a series of changes to the Canada Elections Act that included allowing for two additional days of advance polling, authorizing the creation of special polling divisions in seniors’ centres, and clarifying language around illegal interference in elections. The bill completed second reading in the House on June 19, 2024.

“Justin Trudeau and the Liberals have let Canadians down time and time again. Abandoning efforts to strengthen and protect our democracy, all so they can focus on political infighting. They’ve had a decade to get this right, but in usual Liberal fashion, they kept delaying,” said NDP MP Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo-Ladysmith, B.C.), her party’s democratic reform critic, in an emailed statement to *The Hill Times* on Jan. 8.

“A New Democrat government won’t delay. We’d work to protect our democracy from foreign interference and to strengthen election fairness.”

Sean Bruyeya, a former Royal Canadian Air Force intelligence officer and a government accountability advocate, told *The Hill Times* that he considers the death of Bill C-290 unfortunate, but it could also be a chance to introduce a new bill that includes elements absent from the original legislation.

Whistleblower protections for retired members of the military were not covered in the bill, which Bruyeya called an “unacceptable oversight.”

“Retired public service [members] were included. Serving and retired RCMP were included. The serving military have their own failed whistleblower protection means, which is highly flawed, but at least they have something,” he said in a Jan. 8 interview with *The Hill Times*. “But of all the federal civil service employees, retired military were the only ones that were completely ignored in this bill.”

Bruyeya appeared at House Government and Operations Committee on May 1, 2024, and argued Bill C-290 should be

expanded to include veterans. He told the committee that more than 100,000 veterans and almost 40,000 family members partially or fully rely on Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) for home, medical, and financial support, as previously reported in *The Hill Times*.

Providing whistleblower protection for veterans is key because of a recent multimillion-dollar contract between Ottawa and a private company to provide certain services for veterans and their families, according to Bruyeya.

In June 2021, the federal government announced a \$560-million dollar contract with Partners in Canadian Veterans Rehabilitation Services (PCVRS), a joint venture between WCG International and Lifemark Health Group, intended to strengthen rehabilitation services and support for veterans and their families as they transition to life after military service.

Bruyeya argued that veterans are a vulnerable group because years of dependence on a federal government department for their financial and medical well-being can make it difficult for them to fend for themselves after they leave service. He also added that only veterans would have sufficient insight into whether or not the contract with PCVRS is mismanaged.

“When they get out, [veterans] are highly dependent on any transition mechanisms that are afforded them. If they’re going into vocational rehabilitation or medical rehabilitation, these are highly dependent individuals,” he said. “They’ve been institutionalized for anywhere from a few years to, it could be 30 years, and the fact is that we need to have some effective oversight about what agencies are going to manage that rehabilitation and farming it out to a private corporation was the most irresponsible thing that Canadians could do.”

In an emailed statement on Jan. 7, Bruyeya said that whistleblower protections are also needed for veterans and their families because those groups would be “highly vulnerable to reprisals from either VAC or the company employees and subcontractors, should they occur.”

VAC states on an FAQ page online that PCVRS was selected based on their ability to provide “expert rehabilitation services that are accessible and inclusive,” and that the contract will mean “faster access to high quality, inclusive and tailored rehabilitation services.”

“Making sure that our veterans and their families have the support they need as they make the transition from military to civilian life is absolutely vital. This contract is about making sure they have the best chance of success as they adapt to life after service, and I know it will make a big difference in the lives of thousands of folks who’ve stepped forward to serve our country,” said then-veterans affairs minister and current Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, P.E.I.), in a VAC press release from June, 2021.

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Editorial

Editorial

Trump won the U.S. election on the economy, but he's not talking about it anymore, is he?

U.S. president-elect Donald Trump, who will be sworn on Jan. 20 as the leader of the most powerful country in the world, won the presidential election primarily because of the economy and securing the American border.

He talked a good game during the campaign, but he isn't talking about the economy too much anymore. He's not talking about inflation, unemployment, or the price of groceries, or gas. In fact, last month, he acknowledged that bringing down the price of groceries as he promised will be "very hard."

So now he's saying nutty things about annexing Canada, and gaining control of Greenland and the Panama Canal. As *The New York Times* reported, "he is building a national case for why an American takeover of Greenland and the Panama Canal Zone is necessary."

But that's not what he ran on. According to a report by CBS News, Trump won the 2024 election because of three main factors: the economy—specifically inflation—which was the top issue throughout pre-election polling, his steady MAGA base, and because out-of-touch Democrats were "too caught up in lofty social issues."

Trump is talking about using "economic force" to annex Canada, and acquiring Greenland and the Panama Canal. In a rambling press conference on Jan. 7, Trump did not rule out using either military or economic force on Panama and Denmark. Both countries have responded by saying they would never give up territory.

Meanwhile, Trump described the Canada-U.S. border as an "artificially drawn line," and complained that the U.S. is "subsidizing" Canada by protecting the border. He slammed Canadian imports of cars, lumber, and dairy products, and called Prime Minister Justin Trudeau "governor" again.

He gives himself credit for Trudeau's resignation, and says he told Canadian hockey legend Wayne Gretzky he should run for prime minister. He says Canada should be America's "51st state." Trudeau finally shot back last week, saying there's not "a snowball's chance in hell" of the U.S. annexing Canada. Trump is also threatening 25 per cent tariffs on all Canadian imports.

"Perhaps Mr. Trump was posturing, for negotiating advantage. Yet not since the days of William McKinley, who engaged in the Spanish-American War in the late 19th century and ended up with U.S. control of the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico, has an American president-elect so blatantly threatened the use of force to expand the country's territorial boundaries," *The New York Times* reported on Jan. 7.

Trump's negotiating strategy is to make threats and create chaos, so Canada should fight back. It's time for our premiers—along with the outgoing prime minister—to work together for the sake of Canada's future because Trump's not talking about the cost of living anymore.

This is about the future of our country.
The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor



Where were international groups for Israeli women, asks letter writer

Re: "Women are essential to the peace process" (Dec. 22, *The Hill Times*). Author María Wong is correct to point out that women are essential to the peace process. Prior to Oct. 7, 2023, there were many Jewish women living in southern Israeli kibbutzim who were involved with assisting the Gazans.

They took children to Israeli hospitals for cancer treatments, gave work to the Gazans in the southern camps, many considered part of their families.

One such woman, Vivian Silver, a dual Canadian-Israeli citizen, epitomized this women's movement to bring peace to the region by assisting Gazans. She served as executive director for the

Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development, beginning her work in 1998. Silver worked within the kibbutz to organize programs to help Gazans, such as job trainings, and ensured that Gazan construction workers at the kibbutz were paid fairly.

She and 100 other of her people were murdered in their kibbutz by Hamas. One of her executioners was a Gazan gardener who had worked in southern Israel for 30 years who surveilled the area in preparation for the Hamas raid. There were no international organizations who supported these women's work, or that condemned Hamas' butchery.

Larry Shapiro
 Calgary, Alta.

Wong's opinion piece offers one-sided narrative: letter writer

María Wong's column, "Women are essential to the peace process" (Dec. 22, *The Hill Times*), presents a one-sided narrative that distorts facts and omits crucial context.

Wong cites an inflated casualty figure of direct deaths in Gaza based on non-peer-reviewed claims from *The Lancet* that quadrupled unverified Hamas statistics. These figures, already statistically debunked, exclude combatant deaths and rely on sloppy methodologies, including data gathered via an open Google Form. Her assertion that most victims are women and children is equally questionable.

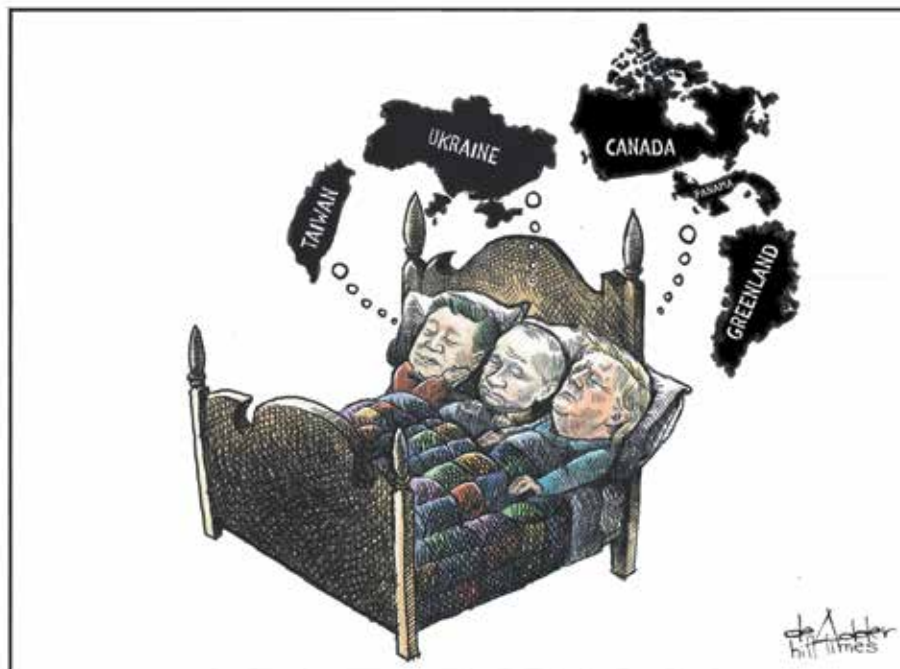
While Wong emphasizes Gazan women's suffering, she ignores the plight of Israeli women and girls. Her column fails to mention Israeli hos-

tages still held by Hamas, the Oct. 7, 2023, atrocities against women, children, and elderly enduring captivity.

Wong also absolves Hamas of responsibility, blaming "the war" as if Israel initiated the conflict without cause. Hamas' violent oppression of Gazan women goes unmentioned. Wong paints a grim picture of aid shortages, but neglects to acknowledge Hamas looting humanitarian supplies, depriving civilians of relief.

All civilian suffering is tragic, but Wong's narrative erases context, perpetuates misinformation, and shields those truly responsible for Gazan women's plight: Hamas, whose oppressive rule keeps them trapped in violence and despair.

Sam Margel
 Toronto, Ont.



Trump: enemy of the state

Trump must be taken seriously. It is time to fight a bully by destroying his bully pulpit.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—Enemy of the state: that is the only way to characterize the threat of Canadian “economic annexation” by American president-elect Donald Trump.

His so-called joke about Canada joining the United States is turning deadly serious.

It is a threat that one would expect from a dictator. It is not a threat that one could expect from the leader of our democratically-elected neighbour, the United States.

All bets are off with the Trump claim that Canada should join the U.S. in the formation of a single country.

He even has the nerve to post a map of Canada absorbed into the United States, with the stars and stripes flag covering all the way from Mexico to the Arctic.

Trump has ruled out military force as a method of annexation, speaking instead about economic annexation.

He continues to falsely claim that Canada receives hundreds of millions in subsidies in America.

He wants to end auto, milk, and lumber imports from Canada, claiming that his country doesn't need any of our goods to survive.

However, Trump did not mention electricity or oil and gas, Canadian exports that America needs to keep its economy running.

Trump also reached out to support the candidacy of Pierre Poilievre as a future prime minister, saying the pair are on the same political wave length.

Poilievre moved quickly to distance himself from Trump, stating the obvious: Canada will never become the 51st state.

But Conservative allies like Alberta Premier Danielle Smith plan to attend the president's inauguration on Jan. 20 in celebration of his victory.

The Alberta premier has also refused to join Ontario Premier Doug Ford in denying the export of energy to the U.S. Ford promised to retaliate on tariffs by refusing to export energy south of the border, but Smith quickly rebutted that Ford did not speak for her province.

However, that happened before Trump launched his campaign to annex Canada.

Smith would be hard-pressed to explain her presence at Trump's inauguration when the leader she plans to celebrate is claiming publicly he will buy Greenland, annex Canada, and take over the Panama Canal.

While Trump's threats are being widely covered here at home, they won't make the news very long in the U.S.

Ford was supposed to be interviewed on the subject by CNN, but his presence was cancelled when the California wildfires replaced Canada's annexation in the news cycle.

While Americans may gloss over Trumpian machinations, we cannot afford to do so.

We need to get tough on as many fronts as possible. One of those could be a refusal to allow the president to enter Canada for the G7 meeting in June because of his recent federal criminal conviction.

Diplomacy could override that refusal, but diplomacy is also a two-way street.

Unless Trump issues a clarification regarding his crazy annexation claims, he should be kept out of the country.

Words have consequences, and the words of a bully need to be met with consequences.

Some might argue that barring Trump from the country would simply poke the bear.

But stroking the bear has not gotten us anywhere.

Peter Donolo, former prime ministerial communications adviser to then-prime minister Jean Chrétien, recently wrote an opinion piece saying that we can't treat the Trump threats as a joke.

Instead, we need to act with political muscle. That muscle should include testing Trump in international fora.

The Organization of American States is where the unilateral declaration of annexation theory could be tested. Last year, the OAS issued a condemnation of Venezuela's move to annex the Essequibo region of Guyana.

Canada, and the rest of the Americas, has an interest in dampening down Trump's rhetoric.

Annexation is not legal, which is why the world has been working to get Russian troops out of Ukraine.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization should also be asked to take a stand on the American president-elect's annexation ruminations.

The United Nations could also be an appropriate forum for condemnation of Trump's hostile annexation rhetoric.

These claims need to be fought at the highest level of international diplomacy, including the potential for legal remedies.

The International Court of Justice should be asked for its opinion as to the legality of Trump's



U.S. president-elect Donald Trump's joke about Canada joining the United States is turning deadly serious, writes Sheila Copps. Photograph courtesy of Commons Wikimedia

annexation threats. It has a mandate to give advice on international legal issues. What could be more pressing than a claim that one democratic country will undertake 'economic annexation' of another?

Trump must be taken seriously. It is time to fight a bully by destroying his bully pulpit.

Sheila Copps is a former Jean Chrétien-era cabinet minister, and a former deputy prime minister.

The Hill Times

Trudeau brought down by his political fragility

When anxiety is the population's dominant emotion, voters want leaders who show strength instead of empathy, toughness instead of sensitivity. Trudeau's political fragility is a byproduct of his personality.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—The game of politics is always full of surprises.

Consider that just a few years ago, not many people would



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau outside Rideau Cottage on Jan. 6, 2025. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

have predicted Justin Trudeau's dramatic political downfall, and fewer still would have foreseen Donald Trump's stunning political comeback.

And it's easy to see why. After all, Trudeau, despite bearing the scars that inevitably come from years of incumbency, still possessed charisma, affability, and good communication skills, all traits that should have

translated into a period of sustained political success.

Trump, on the other hand, had suffered a loss in the 2020 presidential race to Joe Biden, and was at the centre of several high-profile controversies, including ones involving lawsuits and criminal charges.

Why is it, then, that Trudeau, despite his inherent advantages, ended up politically toxic, whereas Trump, despite his inherent disadvantages, managed to rise phoenix-like from the ashes and reclaim the prize of the U.S. presidency?

Well, to find the answer, I think we should turn to a concept developed by statistician and essayist Nassim Nicholas Taleb, a concept he called “antifragile.”

According to Taleb, something is anti-fragile when it grows stronger when subjected to tension or stress.

In other words, rather than breaking when things get tough or chaotic, a person or thing that's antifragile will flourish and thrive.

With all that in mind, I'd argue Trump is anti-fragile.

Here's a guy who, over the past four years, endured 91 indictments and 34 felony convictions; here's a guy whom opinion leaders across the globe regularly branded as an “authoritarian fascist”; here's a guy whom many castigated as a threat to American democracy.

And let's not forget, he is also the victim of a near-things assassination attempt.

Yet, all these attacks, all these controversies, and all these legal troubles only seemed to make Trump more popular with his political base.

In short, he assumed the role of a political martyr.

If that doesn't mark Trump as antifragile, I don't know what would.

Of course, the opposite of antifragile is fragile, which can be defined as someone or something which gets weaker when put under stress.

Doesn't that seem to be the case for Trudeau?

The stresses he's faced over the past four years—dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, the emergence of inflation, the truckers' protest, and the sudden dramatic resignation of his finance minister—all combined to make him appear weak, which ultimately led to his undoing.

So, that's the difference between Trump and Trudeau, in Talebian terms: the former is antifragile, the latter is fragile.

Nor is there anything Trudeau could have done to change his fate.

I say that because, as Niccolò Machiavelli put it 500 years ago, “A man who is used to acting in one way never changes; he must come to ruin when the times, in changing, no longer are in harmony with his ways.”

My point is, Trudeau was used to acting one way; as a compassionate leader who not only pushed a progressive vision, but who also projected empathy and sensitivity.

In 2015—a happier time—when the Canadian public was more content and complacent than it is in today's troubled times, such a “fun guy” positive persona made Trudeau a political superstar.

He was in sync with the public mood.

But because he couldn't change his style, or who he was as a politician, Trudeau essentially came to ruin when he fell out of harmony with the times.

Simply put, when anxiety is the dominant emotion amongst the population, voters typically want leaders who exhibit strength instead of empathy; toughness instead of sensitivity.

Basically, Trudeau's political fragility is a byproduct of his personality.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

COMMENT



Donald Trump is sounding more like Russian President Vladimir Putin than the incoming president of the United States, writes Michael Harris. *Gage Skidmore photograph courtesy of Flickr*

Trump overdoses on unlimited power

Fantasies, delusional thinking, or fevered megalomania usually don't get you very far in politics. But with Trump's election to a second term as president, all that has changed.

Michael Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—When U.S. president-elect Donald Trump threatened a 25-per-cent tariff on all goods coming into the United States from Canada, Ontario Premier Doug Ford said it was “like a family member stabbing you right in the heart.”

At the time, more than a few commentators thought that Ontario's premier was over-reacting. It was just Trump being Trump.

After all, the president-elect is famous for making outrageous threats to get what he wants, in this case, tighter controls at the Canada-U.S. border aimed at keeping out illegal migrants and

drugs. Never mind the fact that Mexico, not Canada, is the prime offender when it comes to drugs and illegals “invading” the United States. Never mind the facts.

It turns out Ford was under-reacting to Trump's thuggish bullying over tariffs. That became clear at the recent press conference at Mar-a-Lago in Florida, where Trump came off sounding more like Russian President Vladimir Putin than the incoming president of the United States.

Trump suggested to reporters that he wanted to expand the size of his country by violating the sovereignty of other countries, and he wouldn't rule out the use of economic and even military coercion if those nations objected.

One of the countries named was Canada, though Trump said he had no plans to use military force to acquire the rest of the continent. He claimed that the U.S. is subsidizing Canada to the tune of \$200-billion a year. He said that he asked Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during his recent visit to Mar-a-Lago what would happen to Canada if that “subsidy” disappeared?

According to Trump, Trudeau allegedly said the country would “dissolve.” Trump suggested Canada could keep the subsidies if it became the 51st state. Trudeau later responded that there wasn't “a snowball's chance in hell” that the two countries would come together.

A small miracle occurred. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre agreed with Trudeau, telling

CTV “my message to incoming President Trump is that first and foremost, Canada will never be the 51st state of the U.S.”

Trump saw it differently. “Canada and the United States, that would really be something,” he enthused at his rambling Mar-a-Lago press conference. He even suggested that hockey legend Wayne Gretzky should take over the country, either as prime minister or governor of the 51st state. Fox News reported that Janet Gretzky liked the idea of her famous husband running for public office.

Trump was even more outrageous with Panama and Greenland. He complained that China was running the Panama Canal, and he would not rule out using military force to take it back. Ironically, the president who made the deal giving the canal to Panama, Jimmy Carter, was lying in state as the president-elect trashed a key part of his legacy.

The president-elect explained that the U.S. also needed to take over Greenland, and raised doubts that Denmark had valid title to the territory. Even if Denmark did have clear title, Trump said, they should give it up anyway. His reason? Because the U.S. needed the territory for national security purposes, and was protecting the free world. The art of the steal.

Both Trump and his apparent co-president Elon Musk are clearly overdosing on the

most addictive drug of them all—unlimited power. Trump has repeatedly said that being president means he can do anything he wants.

Musk, who holds no elected office, has added billions of dollars to his fortune since moving to Mar-a-Lago. His companies make more annually than the defence budgets of Germany or the United Kingdom. Standing shoulder to shoulder with Trump, he now feels comfortable meddling in the politics of other countries, including Canada.

The world's richest man has trashed Trudeau as a “tool,” and endorsed Poilievre for prime minister. He has dumped on British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, going so far as to ask for new elections in the United Kingdom.

In what was his most outrageous meddling, just weeks before an election in Germany, Musk endorsed a far-right, anti-immigrant party, the Alternative für Deutschland, posting on X: “Only the AFD can save Germany.”

A former German member of the European Parliament characterized Musk's comment as “the world domination fantasies of the American tech kings.”

Fantasies, delusional thinking, or fevered megalomania usually don't get you very far in politics. But with Trump's election to a second term as president, all that has changed.

That's because he has run the table, with full control of the

levers of the U.S. government—the House of Representatives, the Senate, and of course the White House. Nor does it hurt that he has a conservative-controlled Supreme Court.

That sense of control is one of the biggest reasons Trump was able to come up with such bizarre cabinet nominations. If his nominations are confirmed, he will have loyalists in every sensitive department of government, including the U.S. Department of Justice. That means that, among other things, his agenda of “retribution” will move forward.

Corporate America has received the message loud and clear. That's why so many of them have beaten a path to Mar-a-Lago bearing cash for the king.

A cartoonist with courage depicted these oligarchs kneeling before Trump with bags of cash in hand. *The Washington Post* refused to run the cartoon by Ann Telnaes because owner Jeff Bezos was one of the supplicants depicted in it. The cartoonist resigned.

The surest sign that Trump has the big boys running scared is Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg's decision to get rid of fact-checkers on Facebook and Instagram just days before Trump takes office.

There is history here. Trump accused Zuckerberg of plotting against him in the 2020 election, and threatened the Meta owner with “life in prison” if he interfered in the 2024 election. One former U.S. government official tasked with combating disinformation told the *Guardian* that Zuckerberg's decision was “a full bending of the knee to Trump.”

The decision was very bad for public discourse, but good for Donald Trump. A world without facts is liar heaven.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Fragile governance is among the threats facing this country

What if we've all let this happen by allowing the staggering growth of the shadow cabinet of political insiders in the Prime Minister's Office, as well as their control of ministers' offices?

Rose LeMay

Stories, Myths, and Truths



OTTAWA—We might look back on Jan. 6, 2025, as the date on which Canada set itself up for failure.

Instead of choosing national solidarity across federal and provincial/territorial systems to stand united against the existential threat of tariffs, the Liberal Party put itself first in spectacular fashion by choosing prorogation.

Hindsight is always 20/20—and the fodder for columnists—but surely the Liberal Party saw this Trudeau era coming to an end, right? Surely, the party apparatus saw that it couldn't last forever, and wrote a plan for the next steps. Because then the apparatus would have a plan for the coming leadership process, and implemented procedures to eliminate foreign interference.

There's been enough hot air about the questionable decisions made in the Sustainable Development Technology Canada file, but let's be honest. Of all the issues facing us, this is not a large enough thing to stall out a whole country unless the opposition wanted just to stall out the country. Now it's clear that was

the Conservative plan. Today's mess shouldn't be laid only on the Liberal Party apparatus.

What if we've all let this happen by allowing the staggering growth of the shadow cabinet of political insiders in the Prime Minister's Office, as well as their control of ministers' offices? Nothing happened in this town unless Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Chief of Staff Katie Telford wanted it. Trudeau and Telford set up the type of autocracy in Parliament that U.S. president-elect Donald Trump could only dream of achieving.

There are a number of cascading crises now. Obviously, the threat from the south is very real, so large we can't even anticipate the potential cascading impacts. In the rush to try to stand against the unpredictability of the next U.S. president, let's put a marker on the fragility of our own democracy as one of the crises. What else could we call this morass?

One of the factors in eroding democracies is declining trust in institutions, and prorogation is such an effective way to erode trust. How about we don't do this again, this standing-down of Parliament at times of crisis? How about we do effective governance like our country depended on it?

I, for one, want to vote for candidates in an election who actually sit at the proverbial table with judgment and decision-making. I do not want power ceded to the shadow control of political insiders. I am personally exhausted by a government and ministers all using the same comms voice—verb tenses and all—dictated by the Prime Minister's Office. Canada deserves a diversity of voices at the table. Lest we forget, that's really the whole point of good governance.

Who else yearns for the days like those of then-prime minister Joe Clark, who had cabinet ministers who actually had a voice? Those were the days when

Clark's secretary of state, Flora MacDonald, pretty well led the Canadian Caper in saving of American diplomats in Iran. Governing in times of crisis requires trust in ministers, and I'm sure Clark would have much to teach today about it.

Canada is about diversity of voices, cultures and perspectives. Anybody who says otherwise is simply showing a remarkable lack of compassion for the experience of their neighbours down the street who come from different cultures. But diversity of voices is only upheld with the value of respect.

Maybe it's just me who can draw a line between the lack of respect in Parliament on a daily basis to the lack of respect for diverse voices from the Prime Minister's Office. Perhaps I'm the only one who sees the partisan ship as the existential threat to us all? Prorogation is today's partisan ship.

Rose LeMay is Tlingit from the West Coast and the CEO of the Indigenous Reconciliation Group. She writes twice a month about Indigenous inclusion and reconciliation. In Tlingit worldview, the stories are the knowledge system, sometimes told through myth and sometimes contradicting the myths told by others. But always with at least some truth.

The Hill Times

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COMMENT

The race is on! Let it be merciful

Does anyone with other career choices want to spend money and time to become leader of a much-diminished opposition in the Commons, much less a third party?

Susan Riley

Impolitic



CHELSEA, QUE.—Here is the choice facing the federal Liberal Party in this moment of national peril—and it needs to decide, pronto.

In broad strokes: does it want a tough-talking, centre-right guy in a dark suit as its new leader, to convey maturity and stability and stare down the nasty U.S. president-elect Donald Trump? Or, will it go for a younger woman—or man—with a diverse career background, an articulate and authentic communicator, with a record of community service, to inspire a new generation of progressive voters?

Is it looking to the immediate future, or longer term? Or will it, as often happens to parties facing annihilation, opt for a sacrificial lamb—an untested newcomer, a middle-rank party standard-bearer—who will take the fall this spring so the Liberals can launch their decade of rebuilding?

That placeholder candidate cannot be the genial Dominic LeBlanc, newly-minted finance minister and beloved party veteran, who has taken himself out of contention so he can attend to the business of the nation.

Someone has to.

It is not an easy, or academic, choice. The Liberals and, arguably, the country need someone with a plausible hope of beating Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre and, also, of facing down Trump. These are dangerous times, which everyone always says near election time, but this time the claim is real. If ever Canada needed a leader who could unify and inspire, it is now.

The problem is that handling the two challenges—Trump and Poilievre—may require different skills and personalities.

If Trump is the main threat, experience, nerve, gravitas and diplomatic fluency are of prime importance in defending our economy—and standard of living—against the U.S. president's increasingly wild and worrying threats.

As this is being written, there are few confirmed candidates, but plenty of buzz. Former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney is



The Liberals' placeholder candidate cannot be the genial Dominic LeBlanc, newly-minted finance minister and beloved party veteran, who has taken himself out of contention so he can attend to the business of the nation, writes Susan Riley. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

actively considering the job. If he looks like just another "suit", he is a highly accomplished one. Born in the Northwest Territories, Carney has economics degrees from both Harvard and Oxford, worked several years for Goldman Sachs in Tokyo, London, Toronto and New York, and served as governor of the Bank of England during Brexit.

He has also been the UN special envoy on climate action and finance, engaged in trying to green corporate multinationals. At 59, he is arguably neither too young, nor too old for the job, and he looks the part of a prime minister "right from central casting," which is one of Trump's main criteria for assessing people's worth.

That said, Carney remains unknown to most Canadian voters and his political skills are untested. His first policy forays—notably a recent essay in the *Globe and Mail*—feature boiler-plate centrist gospel about embracing change, supporting "builders," policing government spending, and so on. In previous addresses, mostly to business audiences, he comes across as serious, conventional and socially liberal, but hardly memorable.

Carney could attract centrist Conservative voters who can't stomach Poilievre's full-bore aggression, which is why Poilievre is trying so desperately to tag him as Trudeau's best friend, "Carbon Tax Carney." But Carney is not likely to appeal to wavering New Democrats, who may not have liked Trudeau personally, but supported his progressive ambitions. Assuming Carney were to win the Liberal leadership, however, he would definitely be intellectually and temperamentally capable of standing up to Trump.

Another worthy emissary to Washington would be former finance minister Chrystia Freeland, 56, who helped steer

the economy to safety during the first Trump administration, with her diligent handling of the new NAFTA deal. Trump has made it clear he doesn't like her, but he won't like anyone who doesn't applaud his every inane utterance and pay cringing homage.

Freeland is smart, with a sophisticated grasp of international politics, and valuable contacts in Washington from her decade as a minister and previous life as a business journalist. Born in Peace River, Alta., she also has degrees from Harvard and Oxford, speaks five languages and is married to a *New York Times* journalist.

Back at home, she has won praise from premiers—even conservative ones—for her collaborative style and listening skills. In that way alone, she stands in contrast to the aloof, well-barricaded Trudeau, who appears uninterested in anyone's opinion but his own. She would be more collaborative and respectful of opposing views—both crucial leadership qualities.

Her problem, however, is her communication style. She may have the second most irritating manner, when behind a microphone, after Trudeau himself. She could, perhaps, learn not to speak to Canadians as if we are especially slow learners, or she may find a more confident, authentic voice when she is speaking for herself, and not from a PMO-approved script.

Either way, her dramatic resignation only weeks ago won her new fans in caucus and the party, but, when it comes to debating a glib motormouth like Poilievre, her chances don't look good. And she will certainly be cast, not unfairly, as a long-time Trudeau enabler.

If defeating, or at least containing, Poilievre is the most urgent concern for Liberals—to preserve progressive values and policies, and any hope of arrest-

ing climate change—then the party needs a true risk-taker—someone engaging, but more authentically so, than Trudeau. Someone new to most voters.

Former British Columbia premier Christy Clark is said to be organizing, but since when has she been a federal Liberal? Her values and experience suggest "conservative." She has excellent communication skills, but has to be considered an outlier at this early stage.

The NDP has been abysmal at championing progressive causes, slow to counter the oily blandishments, and doomsday predictions, of Big Oil and various premiers with facts, wit and genuine passion. That leaves the door open for a newish Liberal star to make Poilievre's smarmy posturing look ridiculous. In a looming election campaign, he needs to be cut down to his true size: small.

Liberal house leader Karina Gould, 37 years old and already a veteran minister, could be that person. She handles the petulant Poilievre well in Question Period. And she is said to be fielding phone calls and pondering. She has two children under the age of three, an impressive resumé which includes a master's degree from Oxford, and a promising future, no matter what she decides. She could, justifiably, sit out this race and try later.

However, that would be a missed opportunity for a party that needs her vigour, verbal agility and direct connection to a younger generation of middle-class Canadians who have fled the Liberal Party, and, in many cases, politics altogether. And who can blame them? Many days the Commons looks more like their parents' pickle-ball league than a forum remotely connected to their struggles.

Another bright light is Toronto MP Nate Erskine-Smith, 40, who was recently—and far too belatedly—appointed housing

minister after another promising star, Nova Scotia's Sean Fraser, announced his retirement. Erskine-Smith had announced that he was not running again, until his 11th-hour promotion.

Like Gould, he is articulate and independent-minded. He voted with the NDP, for instance, and against his own party, to support a national pharmacare program. He has championed causes as contemporary as animal welfare, decriminalization of hard drugs and legislation enforcing zero carbon emissions by 2050.

A former commercial litigation lawyer, with a master's in law from Oxford, he also ran unsuccessfully for the Ontario Liberal leadership against Bonnie Crombie in 2023, and finished a strong second. He has a young family and may not want to take on another campaign now, especially if it would mean leaving his brand-new portfolio. If so, it marks another loss for the Liberals, because he remains the most talented defender of unpopular policies—from the carbon tax to excluding younger seniors from a recent raise in Old Age Security—on the backbenches.

More likely contenders include a brace of current cabinet ministers, including Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson (smart, low-key); Transport Minister Anita Anand (respected former law professor, sidelined by Trudeau); Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne (energetic, nerdy); and Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon (nice guy representing Gatineau, Que., a complete unknown). Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly is wavering.

Whether any of the above decide to run depends on whether they can raise the \$350,000 entry fee before the Jan. 27 membership cutoff and the March 9 vote, and whether they have to abandon their cabinet roles. At least the party belatedly corrected one disastrous mistake—until now, anyone with a pulse was allowed to vote for a candidate. Under new rules, those who register as Liberals must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents.

Whoever does win will be shredded by Poilievre, who will turn their pre-political accomplishments and advanced degrees—neither of which he possesses—into damning evidence of "elitism". In fact, it looks like folly to even try, given the Conservatives' crushing and enduring lead in the polls. Does anyone with other career choices want to spend money, and time, to become leader of a much-diminished opposition in the Commons, much less a third party? Is anyone willing to run for the next time?

Voters who care about the progressive vision so ineptly advanced by Trudeau, who want a leader that will never succumb to Trump's bullying, can only hope someone does.

Susan Riley is a veteran columnist who writes regularly for *The Hill Times*.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

The refusal of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured on Jan. 8, 2025, to leave has put the party and the country in a position where there's no longer time to do anything before Trump's inauguration, except pray that he finds the Panama Canal more interesting than the Rideau, writes Matt Gurney. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



I'm hoping Trump finds the Panama Canal more interesting than the Rideau

When would the prime minister, or enough Liberals around him, have had the chance to make a leadership change that wasn't too disruptive? And what would that mean now?

Matt Gurney

Opinion



TORONTO—In a recent column here in *The Hill Times*, Jamie Carroll helpfully laid out some of

the possible timelines for a Liberal leadership succession process. Given our current challenges—we'll leave it at that!—there is an obvious advantage in a faster process to select Justin Trudeau's successor. Carroll noted in his Jan. 6 column that a normal Liberal leadership race could take anywhere between three and six months. In exceptional circumstances, in which we find ourselves he argues (rightly, in my view), he suggests it could be possible for the party to design a new process that condenses a race to something more like four to six weeks.

Carroll then compared those timelines—the long race and the short race—against the known challenges ahead. Donald Trump will retake the Oval Office on Jan. 20. Our government will need to be funded anew by the end of March. The normal process, Carroll concludes, won't cut it. It'll have to be something put together on the fly if we are to meet these

looming deadlines ... or in the case of Trump's return, at least not overshoot it by too much.

Carroll's column was good and helpful—clarifying, and we could all use more clarity in these upsetting times. But I found myself thinking about the timeline in reverse. When would the prime minister—or enough Liberals around him—have had the chance to make a leadership change that wasn't disruptive and dangerous? And what would that mean now?

There's no margin in dreaming up endless counterfactual scenarios. It was possible for Trudeau to resign on any day; it was equally possible for his cabinet or caucus colleagues to force him out at any time. But there are some ready-made dates we can look back on. The recent byelections stand out. The Toronto-St. Paul's byelection was on June 24 of last year. For the sake of argument, assume that Trudeau had chosen to leave in the aftermath of that defeat (or

was forced out), perhaps making it official in early July. A three-month leadership race, a quick process but within the normal range sketched out by Carroll, would have had a new Liberal leader in place by Thanksgiving or so. I don't know what would have happened next—a lot would have obviously depended on the NDP. But at least when Trump was re-elected a month or so later, we'd have had *some* clarity, as well as a new PM who could then either try to navigate the coming months or go to the polls.

The other fascinating date for this thought exercise is, of course, the LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Que., byelection. That was on Sept. 16. Let's stick with our earlier assumptions: Trudeau either chooses to go or is forced out, and that process again takes about a week. That puts the leadership race's start at the end of September or so. It would have been possible to have a new Liberal leader by the end of 2024, in place for

Parliament's return after Christmas Break, sticking with a short but normal process. An exceptional process could have cut that time down considerably.

None of this happened, it hardly need be said. We're stuck living in this timeline, not others we could imagine for ourselves. But as Trudeau moves toward the end of his career and we begin to ponder his legacy, this is going to be a big part of it.

Crafting a full picture of Trudeau's legacy is the job of future historians. They'll be kinder and harsher in ways that would surprise us today. But for now, we can already guess that it's going to be hard to separate Trudeau's nine-plus years in office from its final months. There was ample time after the writing on the wall had become awfully damned legible for the Liberals to organize an orderly succession process, and under their normal rules. No exceptional circumstance provisions would have been required.

The refusal of the PM to leave and for Liberals to push him out has put the party—and, not for nothing, the country—in a position where there is no longer time to do much of anything before Trump is inaugurated. Except pray that he finds the Panama Canal more interesting than the Rideau.

Matt Gurney is a Toronto-based journalist. He is co-editor of The Line (ReadTheLine.ca), an online magazine.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

The Trudeau government had quickly adapted to Trumpism, declaring that Canada was fully in line on the U.S. president-elect's China policy, and agreeing that Mexico posed a threat because of its Chinese investment, writes David Crane. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Trump's threats could make us stronger and prouder, if we're ready to try

The big question will be how much pain we are ready to endure before acceding to Trump's demands, and how much we are prepared to do to build a new economy.

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century



TORONTO—Incoming U.S. president Donald Trump's ugly threats to use "economic force" to undermine Canadian sovereignty and prosperity, dismissing us as simply the 51st American state, should not be taken lightly. He is dead serious in threatening harsh economic warfare to turn Canada into a vassal state.

Trump, along with his incoming vice-president J.D. Vance, has surrounded himself with many senior figures also hostile to our country, including border czar Tom Homan, head of national intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, and national security adviser Mike Waltz. There is a serious chance

that both Trump and X owner Elon Musk will try to influence both the outcome of upcoming federal Liberal leadership race and the next federal election. With a White House mandate to interfere in Canadian politics, Trump's choice of ambassador to Canada, Pete Hoekstra, is critical.

This is perhaps the greatest threat to Canadian sovereignty since Confederation. It is Trump's 21st century "manifest destiny," and will be a true test for us on what kind of country we want to be: a sovereign nation building our own institutions, prosperity, and values, or a vassal state living in perpetual fear of offending our powerful neighbour to the south.

There's no question that the planned imposition of a 25-percent tariff on all imports from Canada once Trump assumes office on Jan. 20 would hurt, and hurt seriously. It will also be hugely costly to the U.S., as well. The big question will be how much pain Canada is prepared to endure before acceding to current Trump demands, and those yet to come, and how much we are prepared to do to build a new economy and sustain our sovereignty despite a painful transition.

For example, will business lobbies—the Council of Canadian Business, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, and others—quickly press our government to meet a wide range

of current and future Trump demands? Will our tolerance for pain be quite low?

These concessions would include the abolition of our supply management system and the food security it provides for Canada, withdrawal of the digital services tax which forces Big Tech to pay a minimum tax on the billions of dollars in profits that they send out of our country each year, and withdrawal of the policy that forces streamers such as Netflix, Disney, Prime and others to make a contribution to Canadian content, as our own TV networks are forced to do. These concessions would all weaken Canada.

Investment promoter Kevin O'Leary—a former candidate for leadership of the federal Conservative Party—has been to Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate to support Canadian economic union with the U.S. Goldy Hyder, chief executive of the Business Council of Canada, has urged our nation to take "immediate steps" to address American criticism of our adoption of a digital services tax, and our program of supply management for dairy, poultry and eggs. Kevin Lynch, a former senior federal official and more recently vice-chair of BMO Financial Group, as well as former BMO senior executive Paul Deegan have urged Canada to compromise on the digital services tax and supply management, and to push for construction of the Keystone XL oil pipeline while

slowing down action on climate change. We also has our share of high-profile Trump admirers, Conrad Black being one of them.

For its part—even before Trump dismissed Canada as the 51st state—the Trudeau government had quickly adapted to Trumpism. Last November, then-finance minister Chrystia Freeland, who was also chair of the Canada-U.S. cabinet committee, declared that "our economic interests are aligned." Canada was fully in line with Trump on his China policy, and agreed with Trump that Mexico posed a threat because of its Chinese investment. Canada's "toughened" policy on China, she said, "makes us the only country in the world which is fully aligned with the U.S. today when it comes to economic policy *vis-à-vis* China and that speaks to the fact that our fundamental economic interests are so aligned."

With Trump 2.0, Canada's best approach would be to look for "win-win outcomes", Freeland said. But what if, for Trump, the only "win-win outcomes" are those that meet U.S. demands that effectively force Canada to give up much of our capacity as a sovereign nation? As Freeland concluded, "I want to say with utter sincerity and conviction that Canada will be absolutely fine."

Yet Trump has shown consistent signs that he is very much focused on humiliating our nation, so much so that it would

appear he has staff briefing him on how to attack Canada. The U.S., he claims, needs nothing from us.

But there is an alternative. In response to Trump's declaration of economic war, we need Canadians ready to stand up for this country, and to devise and implement a strategy to build future Canadian prosperity, and to sustain our future as a sovereign nation. This will require a high level of unity and trust, with both public and private leadership prepared to commit to a long-term exercise to diversify our economy so that we no longer have to live in fear of the U.S. and its capacity to coerce us as a vassal state.

We have many challenges—starting with the need to significantly raise our capacity for productivity and innovation across the economy, the ability to generate the wealth to support an aging society and public goods we value—including education and health care—and to dispose of issues we should have addressed years ago, such as the elimination of interprovincial trade barriers. As an example of this continuing issue, Ontario Premier Doug Ford recently castigated the province's liquor board for buying paper bags from a Quebec rather than Ontario supplier.

I have called Trump's election a cold shower for Canada—a test of our resilience and commitment, the shock needed to wake us up from too much complacency and too little innovation. The choice is clear: Become a vassal state—as Trump wishes—or take on the huge challenge, including short-term pain, to build on a proud Canadian heritage for a prosperous and sovereign nation for our children and grandchildren.

Trump could end up making us stronger and prouder if we are ready to try.

David Crane can be reached at crane@interlog.com.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Trudeau bites the dust



U.S. president-elect Donald Trump, left, has mockingly called Prime Minister Justin Trudeau ‘governor,’ and says Canada should be an American state. His taunts and tariff threats helped push Trudeau to resign, writes Gwynne Dyer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade and courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Poilievre (not a francophone despite the name) is not really a Canadian Trump, though he shares most of the same ideas. He’s smarter and more presentable—more like U.S. vice-president-elect JD Vance, but just as much a part of the extreme right.

Here’s Poilievre’s take on Canada’s governing Liberal Party, as middle-of-the-road as it could be: “First they were communists, and then they became socialist, and then they became social democrats, and then they stole the word liberal, and then they ruined that word. They changed their name to progressives, and then they changed their name to woke.”

As long as ‘crypto-Communist’ Trudeau was in office, Poilievre seemed bound to win, not so much because ideological rants are the Canadian style, but because Canadians had really come to loathe Trudeau. The intensity of the hostility towards him in otherwise calm and reasonable people is astonishing.

People found other, more sensible-sounding reasons to dislike Trudeau, whose government did as poorly as most other elected Western governments in coping with COVID-19 and the subsequent runaway inflation. However, I have long been convinced that they really hated Trudeau because he is irredeemably smarmy.

Now that he’s on his way out and the Liberals will have a new leader, there’s at least a small chance that Poilievre will not be the next prime minister of Canada. Otherwise, by the end of this year, all of mainland North America will be ruled by the hard right—except Mexico, of course.

Gwynne Dyer’s new book is *Intervention Earth: Life-Saving Ideas from the World’s Climate Engineers*. Last year’s book, *The Shortest History of War*, is also still available.

The Hill Times

Justin Trudeau’s resignation is the delayed consequence of a row with then-deputy Chrystia Freeland over the weak response to Donald Trump’s threat to slap a 25-per-cent tariff on Canadian exports to the United States.

Gwynne Dyer



Global Affairs

LONDON, U.K.—U.S. president-elect Donald Trump excels in every field, including surrealism. Leonard Cohen sang “First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin!” but it’s completely outclassed by Trump’s “First we take Greenland, then we take Canada!” And he’s going to take the Panama Canal, too!

It’s probably just bluster and nonsense, but it has already taken down Justin Trudeau, Canada’s prime minister for the past nine years. His resignation on Jan. 6 was the delayed consequence of a row with his deputy Chrystia Freeland last month over his weak response to Trump’s threat to slap a 25 per cent tariff on Canadian exports to the United States.

The actual annexation threats came a bit later, and most Canadian journalists assumed that they were just a way of scaring Canadians into accepting the new

tariffs or making other concessions. They’re probably right, too—but what if they are wrong? This is Trump we’re talking about here.

The Panamanians, by contrast, just shrugged. They have been invaded by the United States before, most recently in 1989, but only around 500 Panamanians were killed that time, and after a while the Americans went home again, as they usually do in the Caribbean (see Grenada, Haiti, Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua).

And the Greenlanders were simply bemused by Trump’s offer to buy their country, as was the Danish government, which looks after the island’s defence and foreign affairs. It has been a long time since countries purchased territory from other countries, and seizing it by force is illegal. Nevertheless, last month Copenhagen increased its defence

spending on Greenland by \$1.5-billion.

The threats may all be empty, and they certainly reveal an ignorance so profound that it may qualify for ‘protected cultural status’ with UNESCO. However, what seems faintly comical viewed from abroad is taken seriously by some people in the U.S., and they are thicker on the ground in the circles around Trump than anywhere else.

For example, Official Presidential Sidekick Elon Musk has recently posted on X that “America should liberate the people of Britain from their tyrannical government.” He posted it as a Yes/No poll, and as of 11:15 a.m. 58 per cent of his fans backed his idea of invading the United Kingdom to free the British from the tyrant Keir Starmer (down from 73 per cent earlier in the morning).

It’s not enough to say that they’re just yanking our chain.

That’s probably the right answer, but you’d feel really stupid if they really did mean some of it, and you woke up one morning to find American troops in your street. On the other hand, what could you do to lessen that possibility that wouldn’t look equally stupid?

It’s the same dilemma you always have when dealing with the threats of madmen, either real or fake. Let’s just look at the bright side, which is that Trump’s threats have finally forced ‘Governor’ Trudeau—as Trump mockingly calls him (implying that what he governs is just an American state)—to resign.

That is good news because it opens up a faint possibility that Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre will not be the next prime minister of Canada. An election is due no later than October, and so long as Trudeau was in the race Poilievre was the sure winner.

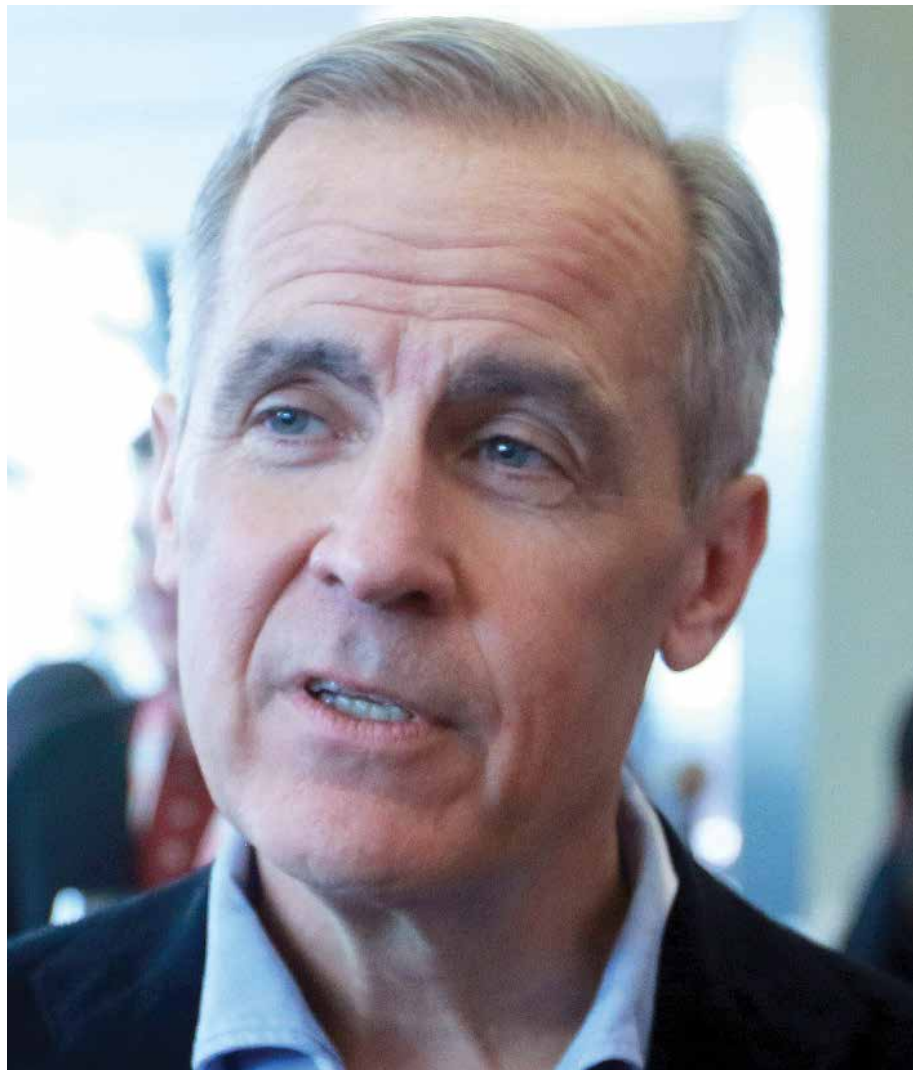


The intense hostility towards Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured Jan. 6, in otherwise reasonable people is astonishing, but it’s likely because Trudeau was irredeemably smarmy, writes Gwynne Dyer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre is not really a Canadian Trump, though he shares most of the same ideas, writes Gwynne Dyer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

COMMENT



Liberal MP Chrystia Freeland, left, and former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney are seen as the front-runners in the upcoming Liberal leadership race. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia

What will and may happen by March 24

The new PM could entice the NDP to jettison its plan to vote down the government by promising that a reconvened Commons would speedily legislate a new electoral system, something the NDP has been demanding for decades.

Nelson Wiseman

Opinion



TORONTO—Canada will have a new Liberal leader and prime minister, the 24th since

Confederation, by March 24. Who will it be? Many will initially throw their hats into the ring, but the two most likely finalists for the crown are former deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland and former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney. Her profile has never been higher. He has been rehearsing for the job.

Rules shape outcomes in elections, and every prospective Liberal candidate is now waiting for the party's national board of directors to spell them out. Political parties constantly revise their rules for selecting their leaders; it will be no different this time. In the last Liberal leadership race, the party allowed anyone who claimed to reside in Canada to vote: no need to be a party member, a citizen, or of legal voting age. Even 14-year-olds were eligible as were temporary foreign students, and there was little to keep tourists from participating.

Parker Lund, the Liberal Party's director of communications, appears to favour maintaining that method, saying it is an "open and inclusive process" that invites "grassroots supporters to join at no cost." This time, the process will almost certainly restrict voting to party members, and use

a ranked ballot system as the Liberals and the other parties have in the past.

Freeland's star—once high—dimmed as she became increasingly identified with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his fiscal profligacy, but her dramatic departure from his cabinet last month boosted her status among party members and the public. Carney's appeal lies with business Liberals like John Manley and Bill Morneau, and he has recruited some top-flight organizational talent including Gerald Butts, Trudeau's former principal secretary.

May the best person prevail.

The House of Commons is scheduled to reconvene on March 24 with a Speech from the Throne, but that is less likely to happen than the selection of a new Liberal prime minister by that time.

Here's why. Governor General Mary Simon agreed to Trudeau's request for a prorogation until late March, but he will no longer be the prime minister then. Her new prime minister, likely ascending to the position sometime well into March, could make the reasonable case that they need more time to revamp the cabinet and develop a program for the throne

speech. Thus, they could ask to have prorogation extended by a few weeks. Simon would probably take her new PM's advice.

Alternatively, the new PM, knowing that the Commons is sure to defeat the government shortly after Parliament reconvenes, could ask the GG for its dissolution. Defeat at the hands of Parliament humiliates a government. The new PM could argue that an election is necessary to establish whether their new vision for the country and the overhauled ministry have the public's confidence. Would the GG turn down such a request? Highly unlikely.

There is another potential scenario. It would echo the precedent-setting prorogation of Dec. 8, 2008, secured by then-prime minister Stephen Harper. In that case, the opposition parties had also said they would topple the government once Parliament resumed, but during the nearly eight-week prorogation, the opposition Liberals changed their mind after Harper accommodated one of their demands.

Similarly, the new PM could entice the NDP to jettison its plan to vote down the government by promising that a recon-

vened Commons would speedily legislate a new electoral system, something the NDP has been demanding for decades.

Such a promise would be consistent with Trudeau's 2015 promise to have that election be the last to use the first-past-the post electoral system. In his resignation speech on Jan. 6, Trudeau admitted that he hadn't lived up to that promise, but falsely claimed it was because he couldn't convince the other parties to agree to it. The NDP favoured electoral reform then and continues to favour it to this day. It was Trudeau and his Liberals who backed away from their promise once they had won office. If a ranked-ballot system is good enough for the parties in selecting their leaders, it should be good enough for Canadians.

The media are all in a tizzy about threats by U.S. president-elect Donald Trump. They point to the currently weakened Canadian government as a barrier to pursuing a robust response. Trump's buffoonery should not be taken so seriously. The composition of the government that will have to deal with Trump may be in doubt, but Canada's "deep state"—the civil service—is busy behind closed doors gaming alternative scenarios. Before reacting to Trump and what he says, let's wait to see what he does. Alarmed reaction—like the expenditure of \$1.3-billion to secure an already secure border—is foolish. Reaction should come only after action.

Nelson Wiseman is a professor emeritus of political science at the University of Toronto.

The Hill Times

‘Anything’s possible now’: Liberal MPs shift from ‘hopelessness to optimism’ after Trudeau bows out, though this could fade without the ‘right’ leader

Liberal MPs say they’re feeling bullish about the party’s electoral prospects, but also say Justin Trudeau’s delayed departure leaves little time for a proper leadership race, and for the next leader to prepare for the federal election.

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will be in place, and Parliament will resume with a fresh Throne Speech.

“I intend to resign as party leader, as prime minister, after the party selects its next leader through a robust, nationwide, competitive process,” Trudeau announced at a press conference. “Last night, I asked the president of the Liberal Party to begin that process. This country deserves a real choice in the next election, and it has become clear to me that if I’m having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option in that election.”

Prior to his resignation announcement, a majority of Liberal MPs from across the country had conveyed their desire for Trudeau to step down, either through their caucus chairs or public statements. The decisive blow came on Dec. 16, 2024, when then-deputy prime minister and finance minister Chrystia Freeland (University—Rosedale, Ont.) abruptly resigned from cabinet on the same day she was scheduled to deliver the government’s fiscal economic statement. Freeland’s resignation followed Trudeau’s decision to keep her as deputy prime minister, but wanting to shuffle her from finance to a minister without portfolio with responsibilities for Canada-U.S. relations.

Calls for Trudeau’s resignation intensified months ago after the Liberals began trailing the Conservatives by double-digit margins in national opinion polls. The party also suffered defeats in three consecutive byelections, losing even in traditionally safe,



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured Jan. 6 outside Rideau Cottage, told MPs at last week’s national caucus meeting that he would remain neutral in the leadership race, but that he would provide support for the new leader. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Liberal-held ridings. Some polls prior to Trudeau’s resignation suggested the Liberals were trailing the Conservatives by about 25 points. According to seat projection models, if an election had been held then, the Liberals might have ended up in third or fourth place, behind the Conservatives, the Bloc Québécois, and the NDP.

The party is now undergoing a leadership race. As of last week, potential candidates who have declared or are considering running include Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Que.), Transport Minister Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.), Employment Minister Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.), Government House Leader Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.), and Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson (North Vancouver, B.C.). Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic—Cartierville, Que.) will not run for the party’s leadership, CTV News reported on Jan. 10.

As of press time on Jan. 10, Liberal MP Chandra Arya (Nepean, Ont.) and businessman and former Liberal MP Frank Baylis were the only declared candidates.

Freeland and former Bank of Canada and Bank of England governor Mark Carney are seen as the two top contenders, and are expected to launch their campaigns soon. Carney, according

to campaign sources and Liberal MPs, is set to officially launch his campaign this week, with the backing of about 30 caucus members. Former British Columbia premier Christy Clark is also considering a leadership bid.

Last week, the Liberals held regional caucus meetings on Monday and Tuesday, followed by a national caucus meeting in Ottawa on Wednesday, which Trudeau also attended. At the meeting, Liberal Party president Sachit Mehra briefed MPs on the development of leadership election rules.

In accordance with the party’s constitution, two committees—the Leadership Expense Committee and the Leadership Vote Committee—have been formed to establish these rules and to address financial issues. Four caucus members—two MPs on each committee—are part of this process.

MPs provided feedback on what they’d like to see in the rules, and Mehra assured them that their input would be considered. On Jan. 9, the party announced new rules for the leadership election, setting March 9 as the election date. The entrance fee for candidates is \$350,000, with Jan. 23 as the deadline to enter the race.

Trudeau attended the Ottawa meeting for about 45 minutes, delivering a brief address to the caucus. According to some Liberal MPs, his tone and body

language suggested that he was “pissed off,” as if implying that they did not fully grasp the consequences of pushing him to step down. Trudeau told his MPs that he would stay neutral in the leadership election, but expressed his willingness to provide any support the new leader might need.

“He was very defensive,” said a second Liberal MP. “The tone was not overtly optimistic on his part. I suspect he feels the caucus made a mistake in removing him as the leader.”

After Trudeau’s brief remarks, MPs went to the microphone to thank him for his service to the party and to the country.

Meanwhile, Liberal MPs interviewed for this article said that before Trudeau’s resignation announcement, they felt as if they were going into the next election with both hands tied.

“We’ve gone from feeling a sense of hopelessness to a renewed sense of optimism meaning that there’s a pathway that Liberals can now see [to win the next election],” said the first MP.

They added that people had tuned Trudeau out before he announced his resignation, but now the narrative has changed, and it is now up to Liberal MPs and candidates to reconnect with Canadians, offering a message of hope and assurance that the new leader would

redouble the government’s efforts to address their everyday concerns.

“The media coverage changed from everyone hating Trudeau, PM resigning, to who will be the next leader. The Conservatives are not getting any press,” said the MP.

The second MP described the caucus mood as “blended,” explaining that while their colleagues are optimistic, they feel the prime minister left insufficient time for the party to conduct a proper leadership process, and for the new leader to establish themselves ahead of the next election. Given recent statements from opposition party leaders, Liberal MPs anticipate the government may be defeated shortly after the House reconvenes on March 24.

“Right now, people feel everything’s possible,” said the second MP. “When I say ‘everything’, I mean everything [winning the next election]. What the possibilities are ahead. They’re just pondering the next steps, and how long it’s going to take to figure out how this will unfold.”

A third MP said that with Trudeau’s departure, caucus members feel a weight has been lifted off their shoulders. They now believe that by selecting the right leader, they have a strong chance of winning the next election.

“We don’t have a lot of time, but we have to do a good job in the leadership process,” said the MP, but declined to say who they think is the “right” leader. At the time, they argued that the leadership process has not yet officially begun, and the list of candidates remains unclear. They emphasized that once candidates formally enter the race, it will become easier to assess who might be the “right” leader. For this reason, Liberal MPs declined to even speak on who the front-runners in the leadership election might be.

“No idea, because I don’t know who else is running,” said Liberal MP James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Ont.), who is a supporter of Freeland, after the caucus meeting on Jan. 8. “There’s only one declared candidate [Frank Baylis] right now, these questions are all pure speculation.”

A fourth Liberal MP said that there’s a “real potential” for the Liberals to rebuild the party beyond where they are now.

“I would call the caucus mood going from resignation to optimism,” said a fourth MP.

This MP described Trudeau’s body language during last Wednesday’s caucus meeting as “uncomfortable,” which they said was understandable given that he stepped down reluctantly. Trudeau led the party from third to first place in 2015, and served as prime minister for nearly a decade. The MP said that it was only natural for him to appear uneasy during the caucus meeting that took place right after his resignation announcement.

“This was his caucus before, this is no longer his caucus,” said this MP. “He’s a caretaker prime minister now.”

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NEWS

Political leaders urged to stand up to 'a bully like Trump' as U.S. president-elect threatens Canada's sovereignty, economy



In the wake of threats by U.S. president-elect Donald Trump, centre, observers have called on leaders such as Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, left; Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, second left; Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly, third left; Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc, third right; NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, second right; and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre to stand up to him.. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and courtesy of The White House

Liberal MP John McKay says 'Canadian nationalism is going to reassert itself,' while Green Party Leader Elizabeth May says 'we don't have to tolerate a bully.'

Continued from page 1

and Mexican goods that enter the U.S. as of Jan. 20 unless the two countries take unquantified action on drug smuggling and illegal immigration.

Initially dismissed as a joke by senior government figures who heard the "51st state" remark during Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's (Papineau, Que.) visit to Trump's Florida resort in late November, the president-elect has become increasingly fixated on the idea. At a Jan. 7 press conference, Trump said he would use "economic force" to pressure Canada into accepting annexation.

Party leaders from across the political spectrum repudiated Trump's statements after the press conference.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) responded shortly after on X that "there isn't a snowball's chance in hell that Canada would become part of the United States. Workers and communities in both our countries benefit from being each other's biggest trading and security partner."

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) said on X "Canada will never be the 51st state. Period. We are a great and independent country." Poilievre went on to note that Canada had helped the United States after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and "supply the U.S. with billions of dollars of high-quality and totally reliable energy well below market prices. We buy hundreds of billions of dollars of American goods."

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) told Trump on X to "cut the crap."

"No Canadian wants to join you," he wrote. "We are proud Canadians. Proud of the way we take care of each other and defend our nation... you come for Canadians' jobs, Americans will pay a price."

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.) told *The Hill Times* that all party leaders regarded Trump's conduct as deeply offensive, and his

behaviour and threats are something that Canadians across the political divide could agree on.

"We do need, as Canadians, to recognize that no matter how many other issues we may disagree upon ... we don't have to tolerate a bully like Trump deciding that he'd rather be really good friends with [Russian President] Vladimir Putin than be friends with Canada," she said. "He'd rather align himself with other bullies and tyrants than with a democracy that shares far more than just geography with the United States, as a friend and trading partner and ally."

Confirmed and potential candidates for the Liberal leadership have also sought to present themselves as willing and able to stand up to Trump. Former Liberal MP Frank Baylis told *The Hill Times* last week that his track record in business demonstrated he could handle the challenges posed by Trump, including his tariff threat.

Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.), who at the time of publication was weighing her options on a leadership bid, wrote on X on Jan. 7 that Trump's comments "show a complete lack of understanding of what makes Canada a strong country. Our economy is strong. Our people are strong. We will

never back down in the face of threats."

She told reporters on Jan. 8 that she never took Trump's "threats lightly. At the same time, we can't take the bait, and I think also that we're extremely strong as a country. I think our economy's strong, I think our people are strong, and I think we'll never back down."

Polling shows that such a union—forced or otherwise—is deeply unpopular among Canadians. Just 13 per cent of respondents to a Leger poll conducted from Dec. 6-9 backed the idea, with a majority opposed across all age groups, voting intentions, and regions.

Meanwhile, only six per cent of respondents said in an Angus Reid Institute survey between Nov. 29 and Dec. 5 that "Canada should join the United States." The other options in the questionnaire were that "I have a deep emotional attachment to Canada. I love the country and what it stands for"; "I am attached to Canada but only as long as it provides a good standard of living"; and "I am not attached to Canada and would prefer to see the country split up into two or more smaller countries."

Fen Hampson, chancellor's professor at Carleton University's Norman Paterson School of Inter-

national Affairs, said Canadian leaders were essentially saying what their constituents believe, and there is unlikely to be a deviation in the message that Canada is not for sale.

What would probably emerge, however, is a debate over who is most to blame for getting Canada into such a situation, Hampson said.

"If Trump levies some form of tariffs, whether it's comprehensive or selective, you know, fingers are going to be pointed," he said. "Obviously, the Liberals are going to have to wear that."

The Conservatives have sought to frame the next election as providing Canada in a better bargaining position. During a Jan. 7 press conference, Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer (Regina-Qu'Appelle, Sask.) said negotiations with the U.S. would be better if Canada was in a position of strength, and positioned his party as providing that fortitude.

"Our entire party, our entire caucus, is focused on making Canada stronger, bringing in economic measures that will grow our economy, make more investors around the world fighting to get into Canada instead of fighting to pull out of Canada," he said.

But Hampson also warned of risks for the Conservatives, particularly if they were seen as being too favourable to Trump. The president-elect's ally and tech billionaire Elon Musk has reposted numerous videos of Poilievre with favourable comments in recent weeks. At the same time, Musk has also mocked Canada and its sovereignty, repeating Trump's lines about this country being the 51st state.

"If I were Pierre Poilievre, I would not be enthusiastic about Elon Musk's endorsement," McKay said.

Immigration Minister Marc Miller (Ville-Marie-Le Sud-Ouest-Île-des-Soeurs, Que.) also argued that Poilievre has not been hard enough on "people in his party that are tippy-toeing with the concept of annexing to the U.S." He referred to former *Shark Tank* star and one-time Conservative leadership candidate Kevin O'Leary who alleged on Fox Business in December that more than half of Canadians were interested in a merger.

"When he says to them 'I don't want you in my party, I don't want votes from people that would support you; I'll maybe start believing Pierre Poilievre,'" the longtime Liberal MP told reporters in West Block on Jan. 8.

Hampson said that Poilievre does "not want to be seen as Trump's fair-haired boy, if I can use that term, and he doesn't want to be seen as Trump's puppet, or someone who could be manipulated by Trump."

"I think Poilievre's statement was actually quite carefully crafted to send a message to Trump that, no, he's not going to do his bidding," he said. "That's the obvious risk for the Conservatives because they're more ideologically compatible with the incoming Trump administration, at least on some issues."

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Retaliatory tariffs, PR offensives: how the government can respond to Trump's threats while Parliament is prorogued

While Prime Minister Justin Trudeau remains the head of government and holds a variety of trade mechanisms to counter Trump, Liberal MP John McKay says the leadership challenge gives the executive the ability of 'not having to respond to everything that Donald Trump thinks or says that is actually advantageous.'

Continued from page 1

promised against this country when he returns to the Oval Office next week.

"The federal government does have trade and commerce powers, and we still have a prime minister who could use his executive authority to put countervailing tariffs and embargoes as we did before when we got into a battle with the first Trump administration," said Fen Hampson, chancellor's professor at Carleton University's Norman Paterson School of International Affairs.

"But I think the obvious reason why Canadians are feeling very exposed and vulnerable is because we are in a leadership transition at a time when the bully is returning to the White House and clearly has us in his crosshairs, in part because he had a pretty antagonistic relationship with our prime minister, and that's obviously not going to change until there's a new leader who can develop his own relationship with Trump and the White House and the new Congress that's going to be installed on Jan. 20."

Canada has been in Trump's sights since shortly after his 2024 election victory when he threatened to impose a 25-per-cent tariff on imports from both this country and Mexico on his first day in office, unless both countries took action on illegal immigration and drugs.

He has also mocked Canadians as being the "51st state" of the

United States, referring to Trudeau as "governor" and threatening annexation of the country. The president-elect reacted to the prime minister's resignation on Jan. 6 on his social media platform Truth Social by again threatening a merger, and that in such a scenario "there would be no Tariffs, taxes would go way down, and they would be TOTALLY SECURE from the threat of the Russian and Chinese Ships that are constantly surrounding them. Together, what a great Nation it would be!!!"

Trump said he would use "economic force," but not the military, to violate Canada's sovereignty and make it part of the United States during a press conference in Palm Beach, Fla. on Jan. 7.

In justifying his threat, Trump repeated the lie that the United States was "subsidizing" Canada "to the tune of about \$200-billion a year." Canada has a trade surplus with the United States, the monthly value of which was \$8.2-billion in November.

"We don't need the cars, we don't need the lumber ... we don't need anything they have," Trump said. "We have a right not to help them with their financial difficulties."

"Get rid of the artificially drawn line and you take a look at what it looks like and it would also be much better for national security."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) responded shortly after on X that "there isn't a snowball's chance in hell that Canada would become part of the United States."

Canada is not the only country that Trump has threatened the sovereignty of since winning the 2024 election. He has also threatened to retake the Panama Canal from Panama, and wants to take over Greenland, which is a Danish territory. Unlike with Canada, he refused to rule out military measures to achieve these two aims at the Jan. 7 press conference.

Mute Egede, the prime minister of the autonomous Danish territory, said on Dec. 23 that "we are not for sale and we will not be for sale."

"Greenland belongs to the people of Greenland."

Trump's threats have been made amid Trudeau's decisions on Jan. 6 to step down once a new leader of the Liberal Party has been elected, and to prorogue Parliament until March 24 in order to allow that process to take place.

Some cabinet members, including Foreign Affairs Minister

Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.) and Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) indicated an interest in pursuing the leadership last week. But as of the time of publication, the Liberal Party had not disclosed whether the contest rules would require candidates to resign from cabinet positions.

Asked on the day of his resignation announcement about the ability of cabinet members to function on their portfolio responsibilities at the same time as a leadership contest, Trudeau said the government would continue to focus on protecting Canadians.

"I can assure you that the tools and the need to stand up for Canadians to protect Canadians in their interests and continue to fight for the economy is something that everyone in this government will be singularly focused on," he said.

Opposition parties took a different view. Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer (Regina-Qu'Appelle, Sask.) accused Trudeau of selfishness and creating uncertainty at a critical time in the Canada-U.S. relationship.

"To consider the fact that Canadians don't even know when the new prime minister will be chosen or what process this is all to be sorted out, when we're just less than two weeks away from an incoming U.S. administration with these tariffs threatening our country, this was an incredibly selfish, self-centred move once again proving that Liberals put themselves and their party ahead of the interests of Canada and of Canadians," he said during a press conference at West Block on Jan. 7.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) took a similar view in his Jan. 6 media statement on Trudeau's resignation. "Even with the country facing another serious blow to Canadian jobs and our cost of living—this time from Donald Trump—they're still focused only on themselves and their political fate," he wrote.

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.), meanwhile, said the timing of the leadership contest was "far from ideal," but noted that the country would have dealt with a leadership transition during Trump's second term anyway, whether through elections, internal party contests, or both.

"Inevitably, there'd be a bad patch where Canada is in the midst of leadership [change] in potentially more than one election for us between when Trump takes office and when he leaves

office," she told *The Hill Times*. "So we have to be prepared, as we are in a parliamentary democracy, in a minority Parliament with five different parties, to co-operate and put country ahead of partisanship."

Liberal MP John McKay (Scarborough-Guildwood, Ont.), co-chair of the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group, told *The Hill Times* that "the government still continues, regardless of changes in leaders or leadership."

McKay, who will attend Trump's inauguration in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 20, said it could also give the cabinet room not to respond to every outrageous thing the incoming president says.

"A chaos agent generates activity, in part, by virtue of everybody reacting to what the chaos agent generates," he said. "So if there's no particular response from the Government of Canada because of its current status, then the chaos agent, in this case Trump, in theory will get a little frustrated because he's getting no reaction from the various politicians."

"I think that there is an element of not having to respond to everything that Donald Trump thinks or says that is actually advantageous."

McKay said he anticipated the government would consider the use of tariffs if Trump decides to impose his own against Canada. He said that would affect the U.S. consumer, including on the price of gas, which could ultimately backfire on the White House.

"U.S. consumers are generally pretty sensitive about unnecessary increases in the cost of a gallon of gas," he said. "That's kind of an obvious one, but electricity is the same sort of thing. I think part of the Government of Canada's ongoing response will be to point out to those not only in the administration, but outside of the administration, such as congressional legislators and U.S. governors and various other consumer groups, that this is an unnecessary cost, and unnecessary cost leads to unnecessary inflation. We're not without resources in terms of responding."

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, approximately 60 per cent of the country's crude oil imports originated in Canada in 2023, while the Canada Energy Regulator stated that Canada made \$5.8-billion in revenue from electricity exports to the United States in 2022. But Hampson said

the Canadian strategy could go beyond those two commodities.

"We do have various tools at our disposal that could include, for example, embargoes on anything from orange juice to wine to whiskey," he said. "If we wanted to, we could also put an exit tax on Canadians traveling to the United States, particularly for leisure purposes like Florida or California. Canadians spend a lot of money in Trump's home state of Florida, and we could change the incentive to going there if we wanted to."

"I'm not saying we should, but we do have some tools at our disposal to make them feel the pain."

Hampson said another strategy could be in targeting the tech giants that sought to gain favour in Trump's orbit both during and after the election. That includes Elon Musk, owner of Twitter, who spent at least US\$260-million on Trump's campaign and has been promised a newly created role overseeing government cuts.

Amazon executive chairman and *Washington Post* owner Jeff Bezos banned the newspaper from endorsing Democratic candidate and current Vice-President Kamala Harris and has since visited Trump at his Mar-a-Lago resort.

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, after also visiting Mar-a-Lago, announced on Jan. 7 that he would relax rules against demeaning women, immigrants, and LGBTQI+ individuals on Facebook and Instagram in response to what he described as the U.S. election's "cultural tipping point," and "work with President Trump to push back on governments around the world that are going after American companies and pushing to censor more."

"The tech titans are big Trump supporters. Well, we can hit them in the pocket," Hampson said. "They didn't like the digital services tax, and that was fairly restrictive. It could be expanded to the full range of digital services that Canadians consume."

Ivan Katchanovski, a political studies professor at the University of Ottawa and author of works on comparative politics in Canada and the United States, said Canada could also reorient its trade from its southern neighbour to the European Union and Indo-Pacific. At the same time as threatening retaliatory measures, the Canadian government could emphasize the impact on Trump's plans to his inner circle and the Republican Party, he said, using the "51st state" threat as an example.

"This would be a political suicide to the Trump Republicans because Canadians are much more left politically and ideologically compared to Americans," he said. "I think the main argument against Trump, who is a businessman and basically believes in terms of self interest, and that he basically can just buy off something, or can or use such economic pressure to make other countries join him, is to say this would be bad economically or politically for him. This, I think, would have a much greater effect than just saying this is against international law."

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NEWS

Resigning Trudeau admits Liberal caucus dissent, but fails to own his role in the breakdown, say observers

Justin Trudeau 'showed a lot of honesty' when outlining his plans to step down, says former Liberal staffer Olivier Cullen. But former Conservative staffer Mitch Heimpel says Trudeau was 'embodying every criticism made of him for the last 10 years.'

BY IAN CAMPBELL

Justin Trudeau's framing of "internal battles" as the driving factor in his decision to resign as Liberal leader and prime minister is drawing mixed reaction from political observers.

In a Jan. 6 press conference, Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) laid out his plans to step down in the coming months after the Liberal Party finds his replacement. His resignation comes after months of mounting pressure for him to depart, and on the eve of a potential tariff war with the United States.

Despite months of low polling numbers and approval ratings, Trudeau said the reason for his departure was because "it has become clear to me that if I am having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option" in the next election.

Many observers agreed that caucus pressure played a decisive role in Trudeau's ultimate decision to depart—albeit after many months of dissent. While some observers said Trudeau offered an honest and heartfelt characterization of that pressure, others said he failed to own responsibility.

"I don't think he's happy to go," said Lori Turnbull, a political scientist at Dalhousie University. "I think he was hoping to ride this out, but he feels the pressure from caucus."

She described last month's resignation of then-finance minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) as "the tipping point" that ultimately pushed Trudeau out the door.



On Jan. 6, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told reporters outside Rideau Cottage that 'internal battles' had made it impossible for him to continue as leader. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"I think as much as this has been building for a long time, I don't think it reached the crisis point until she walked away," said Turnbull, adding that event may have "emboldened" caucus members who had not previously pressed for Trudeau's departure.

She noted that Freeland's actions, which provided "a not-so-subtle indicator that she wants the leadership herself," would have "opened up a conversation" that was not taking place amongst caucus members up to that point.

"If there's nobody who's contesting the leadership, there's nowhere else to put your support," said Turnbull. "But once she put her hand up ... that seemed to open the floodgate."

Pollster Darrell Bricker said Trudeau's announcement did not display any contrition, and had "all the feel of somebody who had been betrayed."

"He didn't say, 'You know, I've been here for a long time, so it's time for somebody else,'" said Bricker. "It was basically 'Given all the crap that's happening around me, I can't continue.'"

Bricker said Trudeau's announcement was an admission he did not have the party support to continue, but did not acknowledge he had "listened to Canadi-

ans" and realized that "they want something different."

Alex Marland, a political science professor who studies party discipline, said it appears Trudeau had always "wanted to stay in the job as long as he could," but was forced out.

"Ultimately, leaders who do not control their caucuses are not going to stay on as leaders."

He said Trudeau's downfall could be traced as far back to the actions of Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal MP Ken McDonald (Avalon, N.L.), who was one of the first caucus members to criticize Trudeau publicly.

McDonald pushed back against Trudeau's marquee carbon tax policy, ultimately prompting changes that saw an increase to the rural rebate and a carve out for home heating oil—a type of fuel disproportionately used in Atlantic Canada.

Marland, who holds the Jarislowsky Chair in Trust and Political Leadership at Acadia University, added that Liberal caucus dissenters also owe "a big thank you" to Freeland for catalyzing these events by setting off "a big bomb" with her resignation.

Marland said he found it interesting that Trudeau framed caucus divisions as the cause of his exit, in contrast to the prime

minister's framing of caucus turmoil as representing a healthy diversity of opinion among Liberal colleagues.

'Existential tension for a caucus'

Former Liberal ministerial staffer Carlene Variyan said a "pressure valve has been released" after months of mounting tension.

"I think it is important to be able to have turned this page because it was becoming an increasing handicap for the government, for the country, for the Liberal Party, to not be able to get past this question that has been lingering and shifting and casting a shadow," she said. "So, in that sense, it is a positive step forward."

She said some Liberal MPs were encouraging Trudeau to stay up until the last moment when others were pressing him to move on.

"And when you have that kind of division in a caucus over whether a leader should stay or go, it cannot continue indefinitely," she said. "That's existential tension for a caucus."

She said it was "accurate" when the prime minister "characterized his continued leadership of the party as something that has become a distraction," even if that "may have been hard to admit."

"I'm sure that wasn't easy to recognize," said Variyan.

Variyan said she believed Trudeau "intended to speak from the heart" in his comments conveyed that sentiment. She said she was not surprised to see him almost come to tears at some points.

"Seeing him that emotional was actually the least surprising thing to me," said Variyan, who served as a spokesperson for Trudeau during the 2015 election and who was a staffer in his government. "I saw him as someone who deeply, deeply wanted to do this job and deeply, deeply loved it while he had it. He cared really deeply about the issues."

Former Liberal ministerial staffer Olivier Cullen said these types of announcements are "extremely difficult," and the prime minister "showed a lot of honesty."

"I think it's very hard for people to remember the fact that these are human beings who have jobs, and they are some of the

most important jobs in the world," said Cullen.

He said Trudeau "made the right decision," though "perhaps not at the right time."

"It took those calls to get louder and more numerous for us to get to this point," said Cullen, who said the caucus had lost confidence "in the ability of the leader to win the next election," rather than in Trudeau himself.

'He did the things that got under your skin'

Former NDP staffer Cam Holmstrom said his "natural inclination" is to wish departing leaders the best, but Trudeau "did the things that got under your skin—even in that moment where he's stepping aside."

In particular, Holmstrom pointed to Trudeau framing his departure as "the fault of his caucus" as well as bringing up his regrets around electoral reform.

"He couldn't help himself," said Holmstrom. "And it's fitting, in a sense, that it happened, that even in the moment where he's resigning and basically finally succumbing to political gravity, that even then he couldn't admit, 'Hey, maybe I was the problem.'"

Former Conservative staffer Mitch Heimpel said Trudeau "came as close as he could to embodying every criticism made of him for the last 10 years."

He pointed to the "recklessness" of proroguing Parliament "while on the verge of a tariff war with our largest trading partner," the "style-over-substance presentation" of Trudeau's remarks, and the blame Trudeau put on Freeland and other members of his caucus.

His message was, "Well, if caucus would just let me get on with it," or "if Chrystia Freeland had just let me get on with it," said Heimpel.

"It showed how little he'd grown as a leader over his decade in power," he said.

Variyan said that, in time, "people will largely agree that [Trudeau] governed ambitiously and aggressively for the things that he believed in."

"You don't become as polarizing a figure as he has become if you're sitting there just sort of trying to straddle the centre your whole time," she said.

But Holmstrom said the circumstances of Trudeau's resignation would overshadow much of that.

"Because he didn't go earlier, we're now stuck in a very untenable position," on the eve of the next Trump administration, Holmstrom said.

"The only reason why we're in this spot is because Justin Trudeau refused to accept ... 'Hey, I'm the problem here,'" said Holmstrom, suggesting that realization could have come as early as the party's June byelection defeat in Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont., last year.

"To me, the damage of him leaving like this—and at this time, and put in this position—is what's going to be his legacy in the end," he said. "It's going to undo everything else."

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The Hill Times

The Trudeau legacy

In the lead-up to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's resignation announcement on Jan. 6, *The Hill Times* has gathered commentary, kept under embargo until now, from Canadian historians, political scientists, partisans, and public policy experts.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announces his resignation as prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party at a press conference outside Rideau Cottage on Jan. 6, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



BY ARTHUR MILNES

The most important audience each of our 23 prime ministers has faced is not one found in the House of Commons, the Parliamentary Press Gallery, the caucus, the opposition, or even with Canadians themselves. Instead, it is a constant and mostly invisible audience that has to be fêted, considered, and privately confronted day in and day out.

It is also the only audience a prime minister goes to bed

thinking about nightly, and in the morning, they start back worrying about satisfying it as soon as the day begins.

They think about it—while denying to everyone that they do so—on those long flights overseas, and it is this constituency whose approval they crave more than any other.

It hovers and surrounds them 24/7, and continues to do so long after they've left the scene and entered political retirement.

This audience, of course, is history itself.

And it renders the only verdict that matters.

In the lead-up to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's resignation announcement on Jan. 6, *The Hill Times* has been gathering commentary—kept under embargo until now—from Canadian historians, political scientists, partisans, and public policy experts.

These experts, each distinguished in their fields, have provided their early verdicts on the Trudeau premiership as the 23rd prime minister now prepares to face history head on. You will

find a collection of their predictions below.

His biographers

Stephen Maher, journalist, and author *The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*:

“Rather than share my thoughts on Trudeau's prime ministership, I thought



I'd share the words of former prime minister Brian Mulroney. I interviewed him on June 23, 2023, a few days after the two men appeared together at an event at St. Francis Xavier University's Brian Mulroney Institute of Government.

“Mr. Mulroney called out of the blue months after I had written him a letter asking for an interview for the book I was working on, *The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*.

Continued on [page 22](#)

FEATURE

The Trudeau legacy

Continued from page 21

"I started by asking him about nice things he said about Trudeau at the event.

"He was down there to be our keynote speaker," Mulrone said. "Well, of course I'm going to say some nice things."

"He meant the praise, though. "If you read history, Canadian history, and you understand it, you will understand that Sir John A. Macdonald was glorified in history for putting the country together and building the railway. So, we all are judged on our big achievements, not by the trivia and the trash. That's all I was saying. Trudeau will be judged the same way.

"But Mulrone acknowledged that Trudeau did not seem to spend enough time cultivating his caucus.

"That I don't understand. Because he's got a personality entirely different from his father, who was a pain in the ass and paid no attention to his caucus. If you're a proper leader, you have to earn this every day. You don't think that you're some smart aleck who's entitled to be at 24 Sussex. You have to earn it every day. And that's what most prime ministers try and do. But I don't understand Justin in that regard. I'm told that he's very indifferent towards his caucus in his cabinet and so on.

"Mulrone said he had known Justin Trudeau since he was two, that [Mulrone's] son Ben was [Trudeau's] good friend. He liked him, thought he was a good prime minister.

"What has he done as a politician?" Mulrone continued. "Well, he took a third-place party and he beat the shit out of a sitting prime minister in his first election. Then he turned around and then he defeated [then-Conservative leader] Andrew Scheer. Then he turned around and defeated [Erin O'Toole]. And now he's gearing up to defeat [Pierre] Poilievre. So that's a pretty good political record. Then you have to look at what did he do as prime minister. History will have lots of negative things to say about him, but I say that, if it's Sir John A. Macdonald or Joe Clark or myself or anybody, history will look at the big-ticket work that you do while you were there. Now, I mentioned that he handled the pandemic, with the premiers. He did the negotiation of NAFTA. Those are the big-ticket items."

John Iverson, National Post columnist and author, *Trudeau: The Education of a Prime Minister*:



Canada's sixth longest-serv-

ing prime minister. But at nine years and more in office, he is a consequential figure in Canada's history, and there are policies that will survive his time in office.

"Gender equity in cabinet and the Supreme Court are here to stay, and future governments are unlikely to reverse the intent of Indigenous reconciliation, even if they cut into spending on the file, which has tripled since Harper's day. This year, we are spending as much on Indigenous services as we are on defence. It is fair to say that the commitment to addressing historic grievances was done from conviction, rather than because it generated votes.

"With his mastery of photo opportunities and policy announcements, there is no doubt he promised more than he delivered. More often, Trudeau's Liberal government boasted about how much money it spent, rather than the results that ensued.

"The legalization of pot hasn't worked out as advertised, at least in terms of public health outcomes or the death of the black market, but it is hard to see future governments outlawing cannabis again. The same cannot be said of Trudeau's consumer carbon tax, which increasingly appears doomed. But perhaps Trudeau's (and former finance minister Bill Morneau's) signature legacy is the safety net of benefits that was built early in their mandate: a child benefit that has helped reduce child poverty to record lows, an enhanced Canada Pension Plan, more generous Old Age Security and a bolstered low-income workers' benefit. In effect, the Liberals created a guaranteed annual income for seniors and low-income parents with kids.

"The Trudeau government made a decision to be more interventionist and spend more of taxpayers' money on those on the poverty line. This is reflected in the percentage of GDP spent on programs this year: 15.9 per cent, compared to 13.2 per cent in Harper's penultimate year in office. In constant 2024 dollars, program expenses of \$485.6-billion are 30 per cent higher. Part of that growth is reflected in a 28 per cent increase in the size of the federal public service since 2014, even though the population has grown by just 10 per cent. "The real problem with such largesse is that the government has consistently spent more than it has received in revenue. As a result, the federal debt has doubled over the past nine years—a trend that started before, but was accelerated by, the pandemic. The debt burden is unlikely to be forgotten or forgiven quickly when Trudeau's legacy is being considered."

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Aaron Wherry, CBCNN journalist, and author, *Promise and Peril: Justin Trudeau in Power*:

"Justin Trudeau is a talented, but flawed, politician (aren't they all?) who revived the Lib-

eral Party, breathed new life into a progressive vision of government in Canada, and led the country through the singular crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and the tectonic challenge of the first Trump presidency.

"Brian Mulrone surmised that history concerns itself less with the grubbier aspects of politics and more with the big things a prime minister does to build and shape a nation, and while there were successes and failures, achievements and disappointments, over the last nine years there were also big things: an active federal government that prioritized equality, expanded the social safety net, embraced pluralism, took serious action to combat climate change, advanced reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, increased immigration and respected expertise.

"And all of that played out against the backdrop of a larger discussion about the state and future of liberal democracy around the globe. It is impossible to know with any certainty what comes next—for the Liberal Party, for Canada, for the planet—but there are ideas here, supported by actions, that may well endure."

From academia

Peter L. Biro, founder of the democracy think-tank, Section I; senior fellow at Massey College; chair emeritus of the Jane Goodall Institute; and editor, *The Notwithstanding Clause and the Canadian Charter: Rights, Reforms, and Controversies*:



"It was—first and foremost—a performative premiership. Long on optics, short on the less glamorous stuff of policy fundamentals. 'You'll forgive me if I don't think about monetary policy,' declared Trudeau in a state of seeming self-exaltation when asked in 2021 whether the Bank of Canada's mandate was in need of change.

"And when he did pronounce passionately on grand questions of national importance, especially as they concerned the constitution and civil liberties, one could be forgiven for suspecting that self-interest rather than principle was his north star. Take the subject of the notwithstanding clause (Sec. 33 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms) which premiers had invoked numerous times to insulate laws from judicial declarations of unconstitutionality on the grounds that those laws infringed certain Charter rights and freedoms.



"Trudeau had regularly denounced the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause, including when Quebec Premier [François] Legault's government enacted Bill 96, thereby establishing French as the only official language in the province. 'I've often said,' declared Trudeau, 'that I always deplore any attempt by provinces and territories to use the notwithstanding clause to suspend basic rights without going through the courts.'

"And yet, knowing how important the Quebec vote would be to his party's future electoral fortunes, his government went on to make Canada's updated Official Languages law, Bill C-13, expressly subject to Bill 96 (i.e., incorporating by reference, the preemptive application—and effect—of the notwithstanding clause into the federal scheme).

"Trudeau's father, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, was known to have counselled up-and-coming politicians that while one will inevitably have to compromise on policy, one must never compromise on principle. Trudeau the Younger was one up-and-comer who appears to have dispensed with that counsel."

Andrew Cohen, award-winning journalist, best-selling author, and professor of journalism:

"When Justin Trudeau became leader on April 14, 2013, the Liberals were the third party in Parliament. They held the fewest seats in their history.

"There was discussion of merging with the New Democratic Party, the official opposition, to create a united left-of-centre alternative to Stephen Harper's Conservatives who had governed since 2006.

"But over the next two-and-a-half years, Trudeau raised money, recruited candidates, and unveiled policies, such as proportional representation and legalizing cannabis. On Oct. 19, 2015, he won a majority government. It was unprecedented in Canadian politics.

"In leading the Liberals back to power with 184 seats (39 per cent), Trudeau rescued 'Canada's natural governing party' from irrelevance, and saved it as a national institution.

"In 2011, [then-Liberal leader] Michael Ignatieff won 34 seats (18 per cent). It was a greater defeat than in 1958, when Lester Pearson, in a smaller House of Commons, won 48 seats (33 per cent), or 1984, when John Turner won 40 seats (28 per cent).

"So when Trudeau became leader in 2013, the party was less a poisoned chalice than an empty one. But the scope of his victory in 2015 was breathtaking. No party had ever gone from third to first and won a



majority. No party had ever gained 148 seats.

"It was the largest majority for the Liberals since 1949, when Louis St. Laurent succeeded Mackenzie King as prime minister. A big reason the Liberals won in 2015 was Canadians between 18 and 34 [years old] voted in greater numbers than in any other election. They were attracted to Trudeau's youth and style.

"Trudeau won two more elections as leader, but none greater, and more consequential, than the Liberal restoration of 2015."

Thomas S. Harrison is a former-policy counsel at Ontario's ministry of the attorney general and at the province's Superior Court. He's also worked as counsel with the Federation of Law Societies, and served as adjudicator with the provincial Consent and Capacity Board:

"Prime Minister Trudeau's most lasting achievement in the legal sphere will likely be the 2018 national legalization of marijuana. His government also enhanced gun control laws and strengthened animal welfare by passing new criminal amendments that increased sanctions and banned animal fighting for sport in 2019. Before his government moved on these much-needed reforms it seems hard to believe from today's vantage point that these changes, particularly involving animal fighting, had not been ushered in before the Trudeau government took office.

"Institutionally, the prime minister and his government appointed more women to the



FEATURE



Justin Trudeau, pictured outside the Rideau Cottage, on Jan. 6, 2025, when he announced that he would be resigning as prime minister and party leader once a new leader was elected. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

bench than previous governments, including to the Supreme Court. In 2023 he appointed Mary Moreau, an Alberta judge with 29 years' experience on the bench, to replace Russell Brown, and by doing so ensured that women were the majority on the highest court in land for the first time in Canadian history.

"Similarly, even up to the 2024 Christmas cabinet shuffle, Trudeau maintained gender equity at the cabinet level.

"Medical assistance in dying was more problematic. Most Canadians support doctor-assisted suicide, but MAID remains controversial. It is court-mandated, but there are concerns amongst many Canadians about the moral and ethical limits that should be placed on the procedure, like for those with mental health conditions. Some likely remain opposed on principle no matter what, and it looks to become a partisan issue.

"Similarly, Liberal levies on carbon, the 'carbon tax,' has become wildly unpopular. Credit Liberals for addressing climate change, but their failure to sell their approach is a cautionary tale about what may prove an existential crisis."

Professor Patricia I. McMahon at York University's Osgoode Hall Law School, and director of the oral history program at the Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History:



meaningfully advanced the calls for reconciliation arising from the

"Justin Trudeau's greatest achievements are his handling of Indigenous relations and the courts. He has

report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and improved living conditions for Indigenous people. He appointed the first Indigenous person to serve as governor general, and the first Indigenous person to serve on the Supreme Court of Canada.

"There is no question there is a serious backlog in Canada's courts, and Trudeau's government has been criticized for dragging its heels on the appointment of judges. That backlog is more complicated than judicial appointments. Trudeau should be praised for making more transparent the judicial appointments process.

"Under his government, the judiciary more closely resembles Canada than at any other time in history. He has advanced gender parity in significant ways; more than 50 per cent of the federally appointed judges are women.

For the first time, there are more women than men serving on the Supreme Court of Canada. He also appointed the first racialized justice to the court, as well as the first Indigenous person, along with the first Indigenous person to serve as the attorney general and minister of justice.

"Some may say these accomplishments are simply more evidence of a prime minister whose governments was more concerned with style than substance. Doing so risks trivializing the importance of symbols. Reconciling relations with Indigenous people has taken decades and involved countless court challenges. Gender parity coupled with greater transparency in the appointment of judges—when more women than men have enrolled in law schools and entered the profession for years—is a significant accomplishment that reinforces the power of the rule of law in Canada."

Politicos

Edward Goldenberg, former top political adviser to then-prime minister Jean Chrétien:

"Justin Trudeau will be remembered in the history books far less for how he left office than for what he accomplished while in office.

"After leading his party from third place in the House of Commons to a majority government, he demonstrated his values and Canadian values by welcoming many tens of thousands of Syrian refugees to Canada at a time when Europe was closing its borders.

"Domestically, he massively increased the Canada Child Benefit thereby considerably reducing child poverty in Canada. And over the course of his tenure he introduced a significant child care program, dental care for seniors and low-income Canadians as well as the beginning of a public pharmacare program.

"Faced with a once-in-a-hundred-years pandemic, the Trudeau government—with no playbook to guide it—managed COVID in such a way that Canada came out far better than most countries and with less than half the deaths per capita than the United States. This was a spectacular achievement.

"He also had to deal with the first Trump administration, and was successful in re-negotiating NAFTA in a way that minimized damage to Canada.

"Trudeau promised in taking office to focus attention on reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. There is no doubt that this focus has spread as well to the private sector with the result that the economic status of Indig-



enous Canadians is on an upward trajectory. Similarly, his focus on climate change has also captured the attention of Canadians. But he should be criticized for trying to be too perfectionist with his policies on climate where relatively minor compromises would have brought the country closer together.

"Trudeau will also be rightly remembered for too many apologies for past injustices, and for neglecting to do what a prime minister should do in celebrating all the successes of our country which make Canada one of the best countries in the world in which to live.

"Like all governments, the Trudeau government had to react to events beyond its borders such as a worldwide inflation, disrupted supply chains, and war in Ukraine. By and large, the Trudeau government did its best in the circumstances. And like all governments, in hindsight it made its share of mistakes such as bringing in too many immigrants too quickly even as it recognized the need for Canada to increase its population through immigration.

"But, all in all, his time in office will be remembered fondly for its social policy initiatives, for its focus on reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and for its commitment to gender equality."

Jordan Lechnitz has worked as a progressive political policy analyst, campaigner and adviser for 20 years, including a decade on Parliament Hill in senior roles with the New Democratic Party of Canada. She is the Canada program manager for the German-based foundation Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and regularly commentates on Canadian politics:

"Justin Trudeau's legacy as prime minister will undoubtedly be marked by his final, chaotic days in office. Less prominent but more significant in the long term is the political ground he broke by forging a confidence and supply agreement with the New Democratic Party—a move that leaves a template for functional government in polarized times.

"In 2022, faced with an unstable minority mandate, Trudeau became the first Canadian prime minister to commit to formalized co-operation with another party. There was risk for Trudeau in tying himself to a party ideologically to his left, and for Jagmeet Singh and the NDP in propping up the Liberals. But both saw the potential for advancing key progressive policies that could directly benefit Canadians.

"The agreement delivered significant policy wins, including dental care for uninsured Canadians, steps toward a national pharmacare program, and stronger legal protections for workers. It also showed that cooperation could provide a viable governing agenda, without diminishing the ability of opposition parties to hold the government to account.

"For Canadians increasingly frustrated by partisan brinkman-



ship, Trudeau's gamble was more than a tactical reprieve for a tired government—it demonstrated that politicians remain capable of working together for the greater good.

"Trudeau and Singh's cross-party co-operation agreement was a historic first, and it won't be the last. In an era of division and distrust, Canadians win when politicians understand collaboration as a powerful force for progress.

Kathleen Wynne, former Ontario Liberal premier:



"Justin Trudeau has been an ambitious prime minister. He will be remembered as such. He tackled the most

challenging public policy issues confronting us as a nation: he permanently re-defined the nature of the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada. He opened a process toward respectful government-to-government relations which, if it did not fully succeed, put the country on notice that change is inevitable; he introduced and implemented Canada's first national childcare program, advanced the implementation of pharmacare and introduced the beginnings of a dental care program. All of these are supports that millions of Canadians need. They will quickly become part of the fabric of Canadians' lives and I suspect, not susceptible to repeal by future governments. And he boldly implemented carbon-pricing in a national carbon tax, and while many of us would argue that a cap-and-trade system would have better survived the current backlash against fighting climate change, for a moment in time—beginning with the 2015 Paris Climate summit—Canada was among the leaders in acting on the single greatest threat to humanity.

One final personal anecdote: at one of the large Ontario Liberal Party fundraisers in 2014, before Trudeau was elected PM, but at the beginning of my time as premier, I was sitting for a moment at a table with my partner, my parents, and my youngest child, 30-year-old Maggie. Trudeau approached and greeted us all warmly, arms around my parents, who were thrilled to meet him. Just as he was leaving the table, he took Maggie aside and said softly to her that if she ever wanted to talk about what it was like growing up in a political family, he'd be happy to talk. In that moment he saw into the experience of my daughter and set her at ease. When historians describe Trudeau as a great campaigner, it will be that ability to connect to other human beings in a moment, in person, that will be at the heart of that story."

Kingston's Arthur Milnes' books include studies of Sir John A. Macdonald, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Arthur Meighen, R.B. Bennett, John N. Turner and other Canadian prime ministers and various American presidents. He was the memoirs' assistant to Brian Mulroney, and a speechwriter to then-prime minister Stephen J. Harper.

The Hill Times



Parliamentary Calendar

The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line 'Parliamentary Calendar' to news@hilltimes.com by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper.

Donald Trump to be sworn in as president of the United States on Monday, Jan. 20



Donald Trump will be sworn in as president of the United States on Monday, Jan. 20, 2025. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

MONDAY, JAN. 13

Parliament Prorogued—Parliament has been prorogued until Monday, March 24.

TUESDAY, JAN. 14

Minister Champagne to Deliver Remarks—Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne will deliver remarks entitled "Security—Resiliency—Growth" at a lunch event hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. Tuesday, Jan. 14, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Hilton Hotel, Toronto. Details: canadianclub.org.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 15

Prime Minister to Meet with Premiers—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will meet in person with Canada's premiers in Ottawa to discuss Canada-U.S. economic relations.

THURSDAY, JAN. 16

Hybrid Lecture: 'Unpredictable America'—The Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History hosts a hybrid lecture titled "Unpredictable America: Donald Trump and the Future of American Foreign Policy" featuring political science professor Thomas A. Schwartz from Vanderbilt University. Thursday, Jan. 16, at 4 p.m. ET via Zoom and in person at the Campbell Conference Facility, 1 Devonshire Place, Toronto. Details: billgrahamcentre.utoronto.ca.

'Communicating with Elected Officials'—CPRS Ottawa-Gatineau hosts "Politically Speaking: Communicating with Elected Officials" featuring Ashton Arseneault, partner at Crestview Strategy. Thursday, Jan. 16, at 6 p.m. ET at The Bridge Public House, 1 Donald St. Details via Eventbrite.

MONDAY, JAN. 20

U.S. Presidential Inauguration—Donald Trump will be sworn in as the 47th president of the United States on Monday, Jan. 20, in the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C.

MONDAY, JAN. 20-FRIDAY, JAN. 24

World Economic Forum—The annual meeting of World Economic Forum will take place in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, from Monday, Jan. 20 to Friday, Jan. 24. This year's

theme is "Collaboration for the Intelligent Age." Details: weforum.org.

TUESDAY, JAN. 21

Dr. Tam to Take Part in Panel—Canada's Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam will take part in a panel discussion on "How healthy is Canada's information environment? Action in the face of misinformation" hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. Tuesday, Jan. 21, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York, Toronto. Details: canadianclub.org.

Chrystia Book Launch—The Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History hosts the launch of Catherine Tsalkis' new book, *Chrystia*, tracing Liberal MP Chrystia Freeland's journey from Peace River, Alta., to the halls of Parliament Hill. Tuesday, Jan. 21, at 4 p.m. ET both online and in person at the Campbell Conference Facility, Munk School, 1 Devonshire Pl., Toronto. Details: billgrahamcentre.utoronto.ca.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 22

Hybrid Event: 'The Quest for Medicare in Canada'—The Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History hosts the hybrid launch of the new book, *Tommy Douglas and the Quest for Medicare in Canada*, by Gregory P. Marchildon. Wednesday, Jan. 22, at 4 p.m. ET via Zoom and in person at the Munk School's Boardroom and Library, 315 Bloor St. West, Toronto. Details: billgrahamcentre.utoronto.ca.

Fireside Chat with Carol Off—World Press Freedom Canada is hosting a fireside chat with CBC journalist and author Carol Off about her new book, *At a Loss for Words: Conversation in an Age of Rage*. Join us for a discussion and Q&A about one of the most important press freedom issues today. Wednesday, Jan. 22, 5:30-7:30 p.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St., 15th Floor. To register, visit worldpress-freedomcanada.ca.

Panel: 'Big Stories of 2025 that will Shape Canada'—The Empire Club hosts a panel discussion, "The Journalists' Forecast: Big Stories of 2025 that will Shape Canada" featuring. Participants include Robert Benzie, *The Toronto Star's* Queen's Park bureau chief; Adrienne Batra, Editor-in-Chief, *Toronto Sun*; and Marieke Walsh, senior political reporter in Ottawa for *The Globe and Mail*. Wednesday, Jan. 22, at 5:30 p.m. ET at Simpson Tower, 8th

Floor, 401 Bay St., Toronto. Details: empireclubofcanada.com.

Book Launch: *Burnt by Democracy*—The Centre for Urban Youth Research hosts the launch of Carleton University professor Jacqueline Kennelly's new book, *Burnt by Democracy: Youth, Inequality, and the Erosion of Civic Life*, which traces the political ascendance of neoliberalism and its effects on youth living in five liberal democracies: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Wednesday, Jan. 22, at 7 p.m. ET at Irene's Pub, 885 Bank St. Details via Eventbrite.

THURSDAY, JAN. 23

The Dance for Her—Members of Ottawa's Parliamentary and business community are invited to a night in support of ovarian cancer research featuring an open bar, a DJ, and dancing. Thursday, Jan. 23, at 7:30 p.m. ET at the Metropolitan Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr. Details via Eventbrite.

MONDAY, JAN. 27

Discussion with Joe Clark, Lloyd Axworthy, and Louise Fréchette—The Canadian International Council hosts a discussion, "Making Canada Count in an Increasingly Difficult World," featuring former prime minister Joe Clark, former Liberal cabinet minister Lloyd Axworthy, and former Canadian public servant, ambassador and deputy UN secretary-general Louise Fréchette. Monday, Jan. 27, at 5:30 p.m. ET at KPMG, 150 Elgin St., suite 1800. Details: thecic.org.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 29-THURSDAY, JAN. 30

Crown Corporate Governance Conference—Ethics Commissioner Konrad von Finckenstein is among the speakers at a two-day conference on "Crown Corporate Governance" hosted by the Canadian Institute. Wednesday, Jan. 29 to Thursday, Jan. 30 at the Hilton Garden Inn, downtown Ottawa. Details: canadianinstitute.com.

THURSDAY, JAN. 30

Mayor Sutcliffe to Deliver Remarks—The Canadian Club of Ottawa hosts a lunch event featuring Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe who will speak on "Innovation in Infrastructure: Building More, More Sustainably," exploring the challenges and opportunities facing infrastructure projects in

Canada's national capital. Thursday, Jan. 30, at 12 p.m. ET at the Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details: canadianclubottawa.ca.

FRIDAY, JAN. 31

Foreign Interference Commission Reports—The Foreign Interference Commission's final report has been granted an extension, and will be released no later than Friday, Jan. 31, 2025. Details: foreigninterferencecommission.ca.

SATURDAY, FEB. 1

Senator Hartling's Retirement—Today is New Brunswick ISG Senator Nancy Hartling's 75th birthday, which means her mandatory retirement from the Senate.

SUNDAY, FEB. 2

Senator Dagenais' Retirement—Today is Quebec CSG Senator Jean-Guy Dagenais' 75th birthday, which means his mandatory retirement from the Senate.

TUESDAY, FEB. 4

Chief of Defence Staff to Deliver Remarks—Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Jennie Carignan will join NORAD's deputy commander Lt.-Gen. Blaise Frawley Deputy Commander at a bilingual lunch event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Tuesday, Feb. 4, at 11:30 a.m. ET in Montreal. Details: corim.qc.ca.

'Affordability of Cancer Care in Canada'—The Economic Club of Canada hosts an event on World Cancer Day exploring newly published data on the affordability crisis for people with cancer in Canada. Tuesday, Feb. 4, at 11:45 a.m. ET in Toronto. Details: economicclub.ca.

Deputy Trade Minister Morrison to Deliver Remarks—David Morrison, deputy minister of international trade, will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, Feb. 4, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

TUESDAY, FEB. 4-WEDNESDAY, FEB. 5

National Forum on UNDRIP Act—The Assembly of First Nations hosts a national forum on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. Tuesday, Feb. 4, to Wednesday,

Feb. 5, at the Westin Bayshore, in Vancouver, B.C. Details: afn.ca.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 5

Canadian Chamber of Commerce CEO to Deliver Remarks—Candace Laing, president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, will deliver remarks at the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce. Wednesday, Feb. 5, at 7:30 a.m. CT, at 2 Lombard Pl., Winnipeg. Details: business.mbchamber.mb.ca.

Adam Chapnick to Discuss His New Book—The University of Ottawa hosts professor and author Adam Chapnick who will discuss his new book, *Canada First, Not Canada Alone: The Past, Present, and Future of Canadian Foreign Policy*, along with professor Roland Paris. Wednesday, Feb. 5, at 3:30 p.m. ET at the University of Ottawa, FSS 4004, 120 University Priv. Details: cips-cepi.ca.

TUESDAY, FEB. 11

Food and Beverage Canada's Policy Breakfast—Food and Beverage Canada hosts its annual policy breakfast to kickoff Canadian Ag Day featuring a panel discussion titled "Boosting Competitiveness and Productivity in Food and Beverage Manufacturing" on this industry's critical needs to thrive, compete, and lead both domestically and globally. Confirmed speakers include former chief trade negotiator Steve Verheul, and Canadian Chamber of Commerce president and CEO Candace Laing. Full agenda to follow. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 7:30 a.m. ET at the Rogers Centre Ottawa, 55 Colonel By Dr. Contact admin@fbc-abc.com.

Lunch: Responding to Impending Trade Tariffs—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts a lunch on "How Can Canada Respond to Impending Trade Tariffs" featuring Canada's former chief trade negotiator Steve Verheul, now principal at GT & Co. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

TUESDAY, FEB. 25

The Future of Money and Decentralized Finance—The Canadian Club of Ottawa hosts a lunch event, "The Future of Money and Decentralized Finance: Trends, Opportunities, and Challenges for 2025." Panelists will explore how blockchain and decentralized solutions are transforming the financial landscape, and what does an effective regulatory framework look like. Tuesday, Feb. 25, at 12 p.m. ET at the Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details: canadianclubottawa.ca.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Carbon Removal Canada—Join Carbon Removal Canada at the National Arts Centre on Feb. 27 for its conference, Policy to Progress: Carbon Removal Day, to discuss current solutions in action and how to create the conditions for scaling carbon removal technologies. Details: https://carbonremoval.ca/carbon-removal-day/?utm_source=website&utm_medium=partners&utm_campaign=carbon-removal-day-25

MONDAY, MARCH 3

Canada's Envoy to Ukraine to Deliver Remarks—Natalia Cmoc, Canada's ambassador to Ukraine, will deliver remarks at an event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Monday, March 3, at 12:30 p.m. ET happening online. Details: cdhowe.org.

FRIDAY, MARCH 7

International Women's Day Luncheon—The Canadian Club of Ottawa and The Honest Talk host a luncheon in honour of International Women's Day. A to-be-announced panel will discuss the contributions of women shaping our world. Friday, March 7, at 12 p.m. ET at the Château Laurier, 1 Elgin St. Details: canadianclubottawa.ca.

MONDAY, MARCH 24

Parliament Resumes—Parliament is expected to resume today with a speech from the throne given by Governor General Mary Simon outlining the government's priorities in this new session.